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The Fairy Tale World

Edited by
Andrew Teverson

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THE FAIRY TALE WORLD



The Fairy Tale World is a definitive volume on this ever-evolving field. The book draws on recent critical attention, contesting romantic ideas about timeless tales of good and evil, and arguing that fairy tales are culturally astute narratives that reflect the historical and material circumstances of the societies in which they are produced. *The Fairy Tale World* takes a uniquely global perspective and broadens the international, cultural, and critical scope of fairy-tale studies. Throughout the five parts, the volume challenges the previously Eurocentric focus of fairy-tale studies, with contributors looking at:

- the contrast between traditional, canonical fairy tales and more modern reinterpretations;
- responses to the fairy tale around the world, including works from every continent;
- applications of the fairy tale in diverse media, from oral tradition to the commercialized films of Hollywood and Bollywood;
- debates concerning the global and local ownership of fairy tales, and the impact the digital age and an exponentially globalized world have on traditional narratives;
- the fairy tale as told through art, dance, theatre, fan fiction, and film.

This volume brings together a selection of the most respected voices in the field, offering ground-breaking analysis of the fairy tale in relation to ethnicity, colonialism, feminism, disability, sexuality, the environment, and class. An indispensable resource for students and scholars alike, *The Fairy Tale World* seeks to discover how such a traditional area of literature has remained so enduringly relevant in the modern world.

Andrew Teverson is Professor of English and Head of the School of Arts, Culture and Communication at Kingston University, UK.

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For Professor Bill Gray, who has helped shape the fairy-tale world



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ABBREVIATIONS

Tale type and motif index references



In this collection tale types are identified using the indexing system developed by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, revised by Hans-Jörg Uther in 2004 as *The Types of International Folktales* (3 parts, FF Communications 284, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Academia Scientiarum Fennica). Unless specified otherwise tale-type numbers will refer to this index, and will be prefaced by the acronym ATU (for Aarne, Thompson, Uther). Where contributors identify an index code and title for motifs (recurrent tale elements), references are to Stith Thompson's six volume *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955–1958), now available electronically at https://sites.ualberta.ca/~urban/Projects/English/Motif_Index.htm. Finally, where pertinent, tales in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales) of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm will be identified using the standard abbreviation of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* – KHM – combined with the number of the story in the final edition to be published in the Grimms' lifetime (1857). For instance, the story "Rapunzel" by the Grimms is KHM 12.



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INTRODUCTION

The fairy tale and the world



Andrew Teverson

This is a study of the genre of fiction commonly designated fairy tale, *Märchen*, magic tale, or wonder tale – the short, popular tale of magic that is generally regarded as traditional because of its broad circulation, its perpetuation over time and across cultures, and its identification as a form of fiction that is collectively owned rather than individually authored. Typical features of this genre include an acceptance within the fictional environment of magical events as unremarkable, or even normal; a depiction of benevolent magical forces in conflict with malevolent forces to determine the fate of a central protagonist with whom the hearer/reader identifies; the presence of stock characters who fulfil a limited and often predictable set of functions within the fiction; and a narrative trajectory that involves decisive transitions for the central characters, propelling them from rags to riches, neglect to acceptance, or generally depicting a rite of passage that involves significant change. According to the definition given by the Scottish folklorist David Buchan:

The normative type of the fairy tale involves a quest in which a young individual, either male or female, leaves his or her native environment, engages in various tests and tasks in an imaginative story-landscape peopled with marvellous creatures and strange beings, successfully overcomes all vicissitudes, and at the end achieves property and marriage ... Especially through the depicted conduct of the hero and heroine in the tests and trials, but also through that of other characters, the traditional tale performer exemplifies admirable and unadmirable social behaviour, and communicates both a sense of life's grained texture and, more concretely, the values of the group to which he or she and the audience belong.

(Buchan 1990: 979)

The oldest substantial evidence we have for the existence of this form of storytelling is provided by a narrative recorded on Egyptian papyrus dating from the twelfth century BCE. This is *The Story of the Two Brothers*, inscribed during the reign of Seti II (c. 1200 – c. 1194 BCE), and preserved in the Papyrus D'Orbiney, so named after the English traveler, Elizabeth D'Orbiney, who purchased it in Italy in 1852 and whose

estate subsequently sold it to the British Museum (Hollis 2008; Maspero 1915: ix). The tale concerns a pair of shepherd brothers who become estranged after the wife of the elder brother (Anupu) falsely accuses the younger (Baïti) of attempting to seduce her. Baïti flees his home having discovered, with the assistance of some helpful talking cows in the herd he has tended, that Anupu is planning to kill him. Anupu pursues his fleeing brother, but Baïti has sought the protection of the god Phrâ-Harmakhis, who places a protective river filled with crocodiles between the young men. Speaking to his brother from the shore of the protective crocodile-infested lake, Baïti demonstrates his innocence, and informs Anupu that he is going to take refuge in the Valley of the Acacia, where he will remove his heart from his body and store it on top of an acacia blossom. Should his heart ever be in danger, Baïti declares, this will be magically revealed to Anupu by a frothing cup of beer, and Anupu will know that Baïti is in need of assistance. The narrative that develops from this opening scenario is one of redemptive struggle: Anupu must resurrect his brother after the cedar blossom sustaining his heart is discovered and cut down, whilst Baïti must endure further trials – and further betrayals – in the form of a bull and a persea tree before he is reborn as the Pharaoh's son. The story ends with Baïti's elevation to Pharaoh upon the death of his father, and with his appointment of his brother as crown prince (for the story, see Hollis 2008: 1–9; Maspero 1915: 3–20).

The Story of the Two Brothers reflects the preoccupations and concerns of the society that preserved and inscribed it. The thematic interest in resurrection, the depiction of the divine aspect of the Pharaoh, and the roles played by the various divinities in the story are common in Egyptian mythologies of the period (Hollis 2008: 29–31). The story may also contain references to specific political developments in the course of Seti II's rule: notably, to a struggle for power and territory that took place between Seti II and a usurper named Amenmesse, identified by some historians as Seti II's half-brother (see Hollis 2008: 110, 192). Though the narrative is applied to the present concerns of its Egyptian scribe and the society in which he worked, however, the scribe also makes use of narrative motifs and patterns that have become familiar in popular narrative traditions from diverse regions and periods. The motifs of the animals that render assistance following good treatment ('animal helper'), the heart that can be stored outside the body, the serial transformations of a sorcerer, the sign ('life token') that magically reveals the peril of a loved one from a distance, and the magical obstruction that prevents a pursuit ('obstacle flight'), are all recorded as common fairy-tale elements in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (respectively B300, D2062.1, D610, E761, D672). Likewise, in its broad narrative developments, the Egyptian story appears to belong to a common international tale type catalogued by Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson, and Hans-Jörg Uther as "The Twins or Blood-Brothers" (ATU 303).

One of the best known narratives in this category is the fairy tale "Die zwei Brüder" ("The Two Brothers") in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales, 1812–1815) of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (KHM 60). This is the longest and most narratively complex of the tales in the Grimm collection, but amongst its several narrative strands is the story of a pair of brothers who, upon separation, are told that if a knife they have been given becomes rusty on one side of its blade, then the other will know that his brother is in danger of death. The younger of the brothers travels to a great city and meets with various adventures that include the defeat of a dragon and marriage to a princess; eventually, however, whilst he is engaged on a quest in

an enchanted forest, the younger brother, along with a retinue of loyal animals, is turned to stone by a witch. The elder brother learns of this danger from the magic knife and travels to the city to render assistance. In the city he is mistaken for his brother, and spends three nights in the royal bedchamber, but takes the precaution of placing a double-edged sword between himself and his brother's wife to prevent infidelity. After three nights, the brother is ready to venture into the enchanted forest, where he overcomes the witch and revives his brother. The younger brother, however, upon learning that his sibling has spent three nights in bed with his wife, is overcome by jealousy, and impetuously beheads his rescuer. At this point, the division between the brothers seems insuperable, but fortunately, the hare companion of the younger brother fetches a "*Lebenswurzel*" ("root of life") that reconnects his head to his body and brings him back to life (Grimm and Grimm 1992: 247). The brothers are reconciled, and the fidelity of the younger brother is revealed.

The plots of this story and the narrative of the D'Orbiney papyrus are by no means identical – but they bear comparison: both depict the separation and reunion of the questing brothers, and both include plotlines involving serial reanimations, false accusations of infidelity concerning the wife of one of the brothers, and the elevation of one brother to the office of potentiate. The stories also share a number of common motifs – notably, the magical 'life sign' that alerts one brother to the danger of the other (the frothing mug of beer and the knife that is rusted on one side), and animals that have been treated with kindness and render magical assistance. Such comparisons cannot be seen as evidence of an unbroken line of transmission between the fictions of ancient Egypt and Modern Germany; they do, however, furnish evidence that tales of magic with resemblances to those fictions we now call fairy tales were in circulation in Ancient Egypt three millennia before the genre-defining collections of the modern era. They also show that the earliest literary narrative that preserves elements of the *Märchen* – the story that Wilhelm Mannhardt called "*Das älteste Märchen*" (the oldest fairy tale) – derives from Africa, though this by no means sets a limit on the age or the geographical spread of such traditions (Hollis 2008: 11).

Many similar examples may be given of narratives from outside Europe that reveal the early currency of traditions now associated predominantly with the European fairy-tale canon. Amongst the most frequently cited of these is the Chinese story of Ye Xian (sometimes transcribed Yexian or Yeh-Hsien), a version of the tale type known in Europe as "Cinderella" (ATU 510a) which was written down in the ninth century by the Tang Dynasty scribe and poet Duan Chengshi from (in his own account) the narration of a servant in his household named Li Shiyuan (Beauchamp 2010: 447, 451–2). This narrative, in common with European variants of the "Cinderella" story, concerns a deserving young woman, mistreated and degraded by her stepmother, who is aided by magical forces towards marriage with a king, and whose true identity is revealed following a test to discover whether or not her foot will fit into a shoe she has left behind at a festival (see Beauchamp 2010: 490–1, and, in this collection, Greenhill: 251–4 and Zhang: 342–3). Reflecting upon the possible transmission paths of this story, Fay Beauchamp argues that the narrative in its now familiar form took shape in China in the ninth century, influenced by both Buddhist and Hindu textual traditions, and was transmitted to Europe in the seventeenth century by merchants or Jesuits travelling between China and the major Italian ports of the era. On this basis Beauchamp also argues that the designation of the tale type should be

adjusted to remove the assumption of European primacy: for Beauchamp, the title “Yexian/Cinderella,” rather than simply “Cinderella,” would be more reflective of the story’s complex cultural history (2010: 449).

The Chinese story is not the only precursor that has been suggested for “Cinderella”. Scholars have also drawn attention to the story of Rhodopis, recorded by the Ancient Greek geographer Strabo in the first century BCE, and identified by Strabo as a “*mytheuosi*” (fabulous story) told in Egypt in connection with a pyramid said to be her tomb (Strabo 1932: vol. 8, 93–5; see also Anderson 2000: 27). In the story, an eagle seizes one of Rhodopis’s shoes whilst she is bathing and carries it to Memphis, where it is dropped into the lap of the king. The king is “stirred both by the beautiful shape of the sandal and by the strangeness of the occurrence,” and sends “men in all directions into the country in quest of the woman who wore the sandal” (Strabo 1932: vol. 8, 93–5). When Rhodopis is found, she is brought to Memphis, where she is married to the king. The story, as Graham Anderson notes, does not include Cinderella’s rivals, the encounter of the Prince and Cinderella at the ball, or other details that we would now associate with this tale type (2000: 27); but the familiar shoe test, the helpful bird (in this case an eagle), and the heroine’s dramatic elevation to royalty, are “consistent with a basic pattern of Cinderella” and so may be taken as a tentative indication of the currency of Cinderella type stories in the classical period (Anderson 2000: 29). Earlier traces of the Cinderella story are also suggested by Anderson in fragmentary texts from the ancient Mesopotamian civilisation of Sumer which record the narrative of Inanna, who, having been confined to the spinning of flax, is provided for by a tree, and ultimately comes to marry the Shepherd-Prince Dumuzi (2000: 39–40). Fairy tales, Anderson concludes, “seem at least capable of surviving – for the most part doubtless submerged in oral tradition – over very long periods” (42). Equally his evidence shows that over the long periods of their survival, fairy tales are also shared widely amongst diverse cultures.

Fairy tales, in this respect, were global fictions long before the modern era of globalisation. They are fictions that have been shared across borders and between peoples, both in script and orally, for longer than written records can show, with the result that it is now impossible to say where any given fiction may have originated, or what the various, complex stages of its journey may have been. Any claim to these materials on the part of specific national groups or ethnicities must therefore be tempered with a recognition that, even as these stories, in specific manifestations, may reflect the culture and identity of a community, they also, as tale types, often bear witness to the sustained and frequently traceless intersection and interaction of cultures. Stories settle and resettle, and as they do so they take on the characteristics of local peoples, and become significant within local cultures; but equally many of the stories that we claim as our own may be found in variant forms, actualised in diverse ways but nonetheless recognisably similar, in other cultures too.

This international dimension of the fairy tale has long been a theme of folk-narrative scholarship. In the nineteenth century, as the discipline of folkloristics took shape, the transcultural character of the fairy tale was one of the principal areas of enquiry for the major scholars in the field. This internationalism is frequently overshadowed by the century’s simultaneous focus upon the importance of folk and fairy tale collections to the development of national identities. For much of the nineteenth century, the collection and preservation of folk and fairy tales in Europe, was

part of a process of establishing the cultural longevity and ethnic durability of specific national groups, and resulted in the collation of numerous major national collections, including Thomas Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825–1827), Elias Lönnrot's epic assemblage of Finnish songs, the *Kalevala* (1835–1849), Jørgen Moe and Peter Asbjørnsen's *Norske Folkeeventyr* (*Norwegian Folktales*, 1841–1844), and Aleksandr Afanasyev's *Rússkie narodnye skázki* (*Russian Folktales*, 1855–1864). Most nationalist scholars, however, even as they promoted the collection and preservation of their domestic cultural heritage were aware that the local traditions they assembled also provided grounds for cross-cultural communication. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, as pioneers of folk-narrative scholarship, are commonly thought of as nationalists because of their focus upon German traditions, and because of the uses (many would now argue, misuses) made of their collection by extreme nationalists in the twentieth century (see Kamenetsky 1984). Whilst the Grimms regarded the folk and fairy tales of German peoples as expressions of the durable and original spirit of the German *volk*, however, they also believed, following their intellectual mentor J. G. W. Herder, that the unique and inviolable folk cultures of one national people provided grounds for an understanding of what is common to all humanity (as F. M. Barnard says of Herder's philosophy: "nationalism and internationalism were not currents that ran in opposite directions but rather successive stages of historical development"; 1965: 86). Accordingly, in the scholarly materials that accompany the Grimms' tales, international variants for the stories they collected are listed alongside their German sources (see Kamenetsky 1992: 26–7, and Tatar in this volume: 83). In their notes to the story of "The Two Brothers," for example, the Grimms record both the German sources of their narrative – it derives from Paderborn and Hesse – and cite a range of international parallels, including an ancient Indian variant in Sanskrit collection *Kathāsaritsāgara* (The Ocean of Story), and a Persian version, "The Story of Lohrasp," in Firdusi's *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings) (see Grimm and Grimm 1884: vol. 1, 418–22). This emphasis on the international dispersal of common folk-narrative traditions becomes standard practice in the nineteenth century, and is central to several major theories about the folk narrative developed in the century – including, those of the Scottish folklorist and writer, Andrew Lang, whose introduction to the English translation of Grimm's tales made by Margaret Hunt in 1884 seeks to elaborate on the scholarship of the Grimms by establishing the near identity of many "incidents, plots, and characters" in tales across the borders of Europe, the Middle East and India:

Everywhere we find the legends of the ill-treated, but ultimately successful younger daughter; of the triumphant youngest son; of the false bride substituted for the true; of the giant's wife or daughter who elopes with the adventurer, and of the giant's pursuit; everywhere there is the story about the wife who is forced by some mysterious cause, to leave her husband, or of the husband driven from his wife, a story which sometimes ends in the reunion of the pair. The coincidences of this kind are very numerous.

(Lang 2015: 88)

Lang and his wife, Leonora, also sought to popularize this conception of folk and fairy tales in the anthologies of fairy tales, known as the Coloured Fairy Books, they

produced between 1889 and 1910. “Even a child,” Andrew Lang writes in the introduction to the first of these anthologies, *The Blue Fairy Book*

must recognise, as he turns the pages ... that the same adventures and something like the same plots meet him in stories translated from different languages. The Scotch ‘Black Bull of Norrøway,’ for example, must remind the very youngest reader of ‘East of the Sun and West of the Moon,’ a tale from the Norse. Both, again, have manifest resemblances to ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ and every classical student has the fable of ‘Eros and Psyche’ brought back to his memory, while every anthropologist recollects a similar *Märchen* among Kafirs and Bassutos.

(Lang 2015: 152)

“We are,” Lang summarizes, “still repeating to boys and girls of each generation the stories that were old before Homer sang, and the adventures that have wandered, like the wandering Psyche, over all the world” (Lang 2015: 152).

Even as they agreed in principle about the international character of the fairy tale, however, scholars of the nineteenth century disagreed profoundly about the explanations for this internationalism. The distinction between the Grimms’ arguments and those of the later ‘anthropological’ folklorists represented by Lang is a case in point. According to the Grimms, their *Märchen* had originated with Aryan tribes in ancient and unrecorded times, and had subsequently spread, along with those dispersing tribes, throughout the Indo-European area – from India in the East to Ireland in the West, and from the Mediterranean in the South to Scandinavia in the North. Whilst the stories they collected had international scope, therefore, the Grimms believed that the geographical region to which these story types belonged should nonetheless be limited to the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and Europe. This view was accepted and elaborated by a number of subsequent scholars in the nineteenth century, including, prominently, the scholar of Sanskrit, Max Müller, who used linguistic evidence to argue that folk tales of the Indo-European language area were the dispersed remains of a once coherent Aryan mythology (see Müller 1909). Lang, however, rejected those accounts that limited the dispersal of cognate *Märchen* to the Indo-European (or “Aryan” area), and argued instead for a much wider – indeed global – international dissemination of common tale types. Lang’s arguments rested in part upon empirical observation: new story collections made in the later nineteenth century as a result of colonial exploration and missionary scholarship were revealing that “tales similar to the Aryan in incident and plot existed in non-Aryan countries – Africa, Samoa, New Guinea, North and Central America, Finland, among the Samoyed, and so forth” (Lang 1893: xi). But Lang and his contemporaries in the ‘anthropological’ school also advanced a bold new hypothesis to explain their empirical observations about the international distribution of the fairy tale. This was the theory that similar story elements could be found in different parts of the world, not because they had been spread through verbal dissemination, but because they had been invented independently of one another as a result of fundamental similarities in patterns of human thought and development (Lang 2015: 86).

In presenting the reading public with these arguments, and in popularising them through his journalism and his fairy-tale anthologies, Lang did much to reshape the thinking of a generation about the history and significance of folk and fairy tales. At

the cusp of the twentieth century, he sought to familiarize his extensive readership with storytelling traditions well beyond those with which they were hitherto familiar, and he endeavored to demonstrate that many of the stories that might once have been thought of as national possessions coexisted in variant forms in numerous cultural contexts. Nowhere is this endeavor more apparent than in three consecutive Coloured Fairy Books that Andrew and Leonora Lang produced between 1904 and 1907, each of which exhibited to the British public an extraordinary cornucopia of global traditions: *The Brown Fairy Book* (1904) places side by side the narratives of Aboriginal Australians, Ancient Egyptians, the Basutos of South Africa, Brazilians, Germans, the Icelandic, Indians, Laps, Native Americans, and Persians; *The Orange Fairy Book* (1906) incorporates Berber, Catalan, Celtic, Danish, French, Punjabi, Rhodesian, Scandinavian, Scottish, Slavic, and Ugandan stories; and *The Olive Fairy Book* (1907) features, in addition to more stories from the above sources, Armenian, Sudanese, and Turkish tales. It is arguably from these three anthologies that we can date the now widespread conception that the diverse traditional magical narratives of the world can be assembled under the universalising (but also European) banner of ‘fairy’.

Whilst the Coloured Fairy Books did a great deal to introduce early twentieth century readers to the international diversity of the folk and fairy tale, however, it would be a mistake to assume that the diverse cultures represented in the fairy books are approached on equal terms. In the first place, Lang’s culturally evolutionist approach to human civilisation depended upon the assertion that some civilisations – the civilisations of Western Europe, for instance – had reached a relatively advanced stage of development, whilst others were presented as being at primitive stages of development. Though these stories appear side by side in the Coloured Fairy Books, therefore, they are conceived, by Lang, to belong to a hierarchy in which Western European traditions represent modernity, and ‘native’ traditions reveal to Europe the ‘savage’ past it has left behind.

As this focus upon the evolution of European civilisation will suggest, furthermore, the fairy books also work to reinforce fundamental disparities between the cultural traditions it draws upon by making Europeans – specifically the British – the central subject of address, whilst relegating cultures conceived as other to the margins. This practice becomes especially apparent in the prefaces to the fairy books, in which Lang repeatedly addresses British readers as his assumed audience whilst positioning the non-European cultures upon which he draws as objects of European attention and anthropological or folkloristic study. Lang also explains in his prefaces that the tales incorporated into the fairy books have been actively reworked to suit the tastes and social priorities of British children and their families. In the Preface to *The Crimson Fairy Book*, for instance, Lang records that the international stories he and his wife have gathered have been “adapted to the needs of British children by various hands” (Lang 1903: v). More substantially, in his Preface to *The Brown Fairy Book*, Lang notes that “Mrs Lang” in her adaptations of stories: “does not give them exactly as they are told by all sorts of outlandish natives, but makes them up in the hope white people will like them, skipping the pieces which they will not like” (Lang 1904: viii). As this formulation will suggest, it is not an objective of the fairy books to enable an understanding of the traditions of other cultures on their own terms, but to repackage and reformulate these stories so that they can be easily consumed by European readers.

We might further note that in many cases, Lang's renderings of these native traditions are not the product of a single act of European mediation, but the culmination of serial mediations. The story of "The Bunyip," for instance, which appears as the fourth tale in *The Brown Fairy Book*, was originally collected from Aboriginal Australians (the region and people are not recorded) by the British colonial Mr W. Dunlop in around 1850, and preserved in the form of notes (Dunlop and Holmes 1899: 22). Later, some 50 years after this act of collection, Mr Dunlop's daughter, "Mrs David Lyall," worked these notes up into a coherent narrative in English, and passed the story, along with several others, to Mr Connop Schmitz, who in turn passed it to T. V. Holmes of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, who published it in the Institute's journal (Dunlop and Holmes 1899: 22). Here Andrew and Leonora Lang found it, and Leonora Lang again reworked the story for its publication five years later in *The Brown Fairy Book*. It is impossible to know the extent to which Mrs Lyall's reworking of her father's notes changed the narrative, or indeed, what changes were imposed upon the traditional story by Mr Dunlop in the act of collection, but Leonora Lang's alterations to the story printed in the *Journal of the Anthropological Society* are extensive and considerable. A comparison of the opening of the story written by Mrs Lyall and the story as reworked by Leonora Lang is indicative. Mrs Lyall's story opens:

On a bright sunny day, after all the rain had passed, a party of young men went out from the camp to look for food to supply the *lubras* and children. They had their spears in their hands and amused themselves as they went through the honeysuckles and green flats by throwing their spears. The air rang with the loud young voices and cheerful mellow laugh unchecked by any fear. The country was all their own, or there were too many of them to dread an attack. There was not supposed to be any dangerous animal near; they talked of their skill in the chase, of throwing the spear or boomerang, and of how far they must walk before they might expect to see the game they sought.

(Dunlop and Holmes 1899: 22)

Leonora Lang's adaptation begins as follows:

Long, long ago, far, far away on the other side of the world, some young men left the camp where they lived to get some food for their wives and children. The sun was hot, but they liked heat, and as they went they ran races and tried who could hurl his spear the farthest, or was cleverest in throwing a strange weapon called a boomerang, which always returns to the thrower. They did not get on very fast at this rate.

(Lang 1904: 71)

These changes are not merely stylistic; they also intervene in the meaning and significance of the story. In the Lang version, the elaborated opening formula serves to distance the tale in time and space from its British readers, making it more explicitly into an 'other' story. This act of othering is then compounded by the details that follow: Leonora Lang adds that the sun was hot, but that the characters in the story liked the heat – an observation that an Aboriginal Australian narrator would not

make – and the boomerang becomes a “strange weapon” the function of which needs to be explained to readers. In this way, the story, though it is purportedly told by Aboriginal Australians, nonetheless presents them as objects of curiosity, establishing a ‘them’ and ‘us’ relationship, in which the apparent subjects of the story become objects of attention, whilst the British reader becomes the observing agency.

Even as the story emphasizes the remoteness of its subject matter from the British reader, however, it also makes it more homely, familiar, and unthreatening. Lang’s opening formula, whilst conjuring the idea of distance, makes the story resemble a British fairy tale more closely, and so allows British readers to position the fiction more easily in relation to their own understanding of generic categories. Simultaneously, unfamiliar terms such as *lubras* (now regarded as a racially offensive term for Aboriginal Australian women) have been removed, whilst more recognisable signifiers of Aboriginal Australian life (the boomerang) are retained. Leonora Lang has also removed observations that might have uncomfortable political implications. In Lyall’s story, the observation that the protagonists are “unchecked by any fear” and that “[t]he country was all their own, or there were too many of them to dread an attack,” raises the spectre of colonial occupation and the dispossession this would entail – it also opens the door to a broader allegorical reading of this story about the impending destruction of the community. In Lang’s revision, however, this observation has disappeared, along with any potential anticolonial sentiment, and been replaced with the statement that the hunters “did not get on very fast” because of their games, a clause that both removes authority from the protagonists – indeed, positions them as unruly children – and works to locate the story more securely as a cautionary tale in the European mode.

As this brief discussion will suggest, the notion that this story (like many other presentations of ‘native’ tradition in the Coloured Fairy Books) offers either a disinterested or authentic insight into the cultures of Australian Aboriginal peoples cannot be sustained. The story is a product of an unequal power relation, in which a white British settler (Dunlop) has claimed the traditions of a colonized people, and appointed himself the preserving authority of that tradition; the narrative has then been substantially reworked, after a significant gap of time, by a British author, handed, as an object of anthropological evidence, between European social scientists, and finally rewritten again, and again substantially revised, for the British children’s book market. Little wonder that Andrew Lang, by the end of processes such as this, can write that stories “collected from the lips of the Australian savage ... are closely akin to our own” (Lang 1901: vii). On surveying the extent to which the story has been interfered with and denatured by European mediators, however, one might legitimately question whether these similarities result from the universality of storytelling, as Lang contends, or from a programmatic imposition of European sensibilities, and European languages, upon the narrative traditions of others.

The Langs’ internationalism, in these respects, does not translate into an endeavor to contest the centrality of Europe in the fairy-tale canon, or to present non-European traditions in their own terms; quite the contrary, it works to consolidate European cultural authority by assembling the narratives of the world for European inspection and appropriation, and by forcing them to fit the patterns of European expectation (see Hines 2010; Naithani 2010). The stories of the world, in this endeavor, are understood in the light of theoretical and ideological constructions that argue for

the supremacy of Europe; and Europe, whilst it takes cognisance of the world's fairy tales, remains the speaking subject of the canon, whilst the 'other' tales it examines and occasionally admits, are positioned as passive objects of European attention.

In light of this problematic history of European approaches to international tradition, it has become one of the challenges facing scholars of the international fairy tale today to articulate the international and cross-cultural character of tradition whilst simultaneously contesting the universalising gesture that writes the self onto the globe. As Donald Haase notes, following his exposé of critical abuses of fairy-tale scholarship in an important essay of 2010, the first step towards the decolonisation of fairy-tale studies "requires that we resist the twin urges to universalize traditional narratives at the expense of their specific historical and sociocultural contexts and to generalize the European fairy tale as an ahistorical genre" (Haase 2010: 29). This, Haase adds, "makes for difficult and messy work" because "the complexity of fairy-tale textuality, contextualisation, and the transcultural turn disrupt the neat categories, assumptions, and dichotomies that we have used to talk about fairy tales for nearly two hundred years" (31). Nevertheless, "rethinking that powerful and seductive nineteenth-century model is precisely what the field of fairy tale studies requires" (31).

In the last three decades of scholarship in folk- and fairy-tale studies, there have been a variety of contributions to this intellectual endeavor. Scholars have worked to expose orientalist and Eurocentric assumptions made about – and through – fairy tales (Bacchilega 2013; Hermansson 2009; Kabbani 1986; Makdisi and Nussbaum 2008; Marzolph 2007); efforts have been made to understand how canonical texts and collections function to reinforce and embed polarising attitudes to race and identity (Hines 2010; Lau 2016; Lester 2010; Naithani 2010); and the repositioning and recovery of stories or story collections marginalized, neglected or misunderstood within the dominant Euro-American canon, has become of paramount importance (Abrahams 1983; Finnegan 2012; Haring 2007; Naithani 2006). Scholars have also worked to express conceptions of international fairy tales that challenge hierarchical, centralized and universalising modes of apprehension, and promote instead forms of scholarship that require a complex, situational and intersectional understanding of the genre and its diverse manifestations. A major contribution to this latter project is made by Cristina Bacchilega in her 2013 study *Fairy Tales Transformed?: Twenty-First Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder*, in which she seeks to "provincialize" the Euro-American literary canon of the fairy tale by relocating this tradition within a non-hierarchical and transnational twenty-first century "fairy-tale web of reading and writing practices" (2013: ix). This "fairy-tale web," Bacchilega argues, whilst it does not, in itself, entail a challenge to hegemonic uses of the fairy tale (indeed, globalized, capitalist uses of the genre may equally work to consolidate a Euro- and American-centric canon), nonetheless facilitates a "generalized awareness that the fairy tale as a genre is not simple or one," which can in turn become the basis of decentring approaches to the genre (2013: 27).

The present collection, reflecting the international orientation of its title and of the Routledge series within which it is placed, seeks to extend and elaborate the emerging critique of the Euro-American focus of fairy-tale studies to date. This entails four dominant approaches to the genre. First, this collection revisits the European canon, but with a view to making that canon strange: showing how that canon is

forged from international influences, and exposing the hidden assumptions that have resulted in a local European form of an international genre becoming seen as the universal and transcendent embodiment of the form. Second, this collection seeks to show how the genre of the *Märchen*, or magic tale, has developed differently in diverse regions of the world, both as a form of creative and cultural expression that has its own distinct history, and as an artistic form that responds to globally dominant forms of the genre. Third, contributors to this collection seek to apply to the global fairy tale analytical frameworks that disrupt dominant assumptions made about, and mediated through, fairy tales, and develop more inclusive readings of the genre – including those derived from feminism, queer theory, environmentalism, new materialism, post humanism, and disability theory. Fourth, and finally, this study seeks to show how contemporary writers and artists, using diverse media, have worked to decentralize creative approaches to the fairy tale by interrogating canonical European and American narratives, promoting alternative traditions, and creating hybrid artistic works that place diverse narrative traditions in new conjunctions. Together these approaches represent an endeavor to understand the fairy tale from multiple cultural locations across the globe, and in so doing to challenge the approach that, until recently, has predominated in fairy-tale studies, of picturing the major European and North American contributions – in Bacchilega’s terms, the quadrumvirate of Perrault-Grimm-Andersen-Disney (present volume: 35) – as the main mast of the tradition, whilst contributions from elsewhere are seen as so many supplementary scraps of rigging, to be incorporated or excluded as convenience or ideology determine.

In the context of this discussion, terminology itself will become part of the contested terrain. The term ‘fairy tale’ is retained in the title of this volume and is used by many of its contributors, but it is understood to be a problematic term, and subject to critical interrogation, on a number of grounds. First, it is a term of European origin – an English translation of the French *conte de fées* (plural: *contes de fées*) – that describes, at least at the point of its conception, a specific form of literary storytelling developed in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in imitation (sometimes parody) of popular oral traditions (see Jones in this volume: 68–9, and Zhang: 335–6). Second, it is a term that, despite its narrow European origins, has, at least since the stories of the *Thousand and One Nights* were first designated fairy tales by a European readership in the eighteenth century, been used indiscriminately to describe traditional tales of magic the world over – often with little cognisance of the cultural and historical specificity of these narratives. Third, the term, and the concept, ‘fairy tale’ has frequently been employed in the consolidation of hierarchising distinctions between those with cultural authority and those subject to cultural authority – ‘fairy tales’ being allocated to the civilized and the literate whilst cognate narrative traditions belonging to the poor or to remote peoples are relegated to the status of the folk tale, coded as an anthropological rather than an artistic category, and aligned with civilisational inferiority (see Yenika-Agbaw in this volume: 190). To challenge these distinctions, and to resist the freight of historical association that the term fairy tale carries, many commentators prefer to use alternative designations when describing forms of popular magical fiction – either more neutral scholarly terms, such as the German term used by folklorists *Märchen*, less culturally freighted descriptions such as ‘wonder tale’ and ‘magic tale,’ or more culturally representative local terminologies (see, in the present collection, Bierhorst: 199;

Lothspeich: 309–10; Marzolph: 45–6; Westhuizen: 122; Zhang: 336–7). At the same time, however, this study also argues for the continuing validity of global applications of the term fairy tale where it is used in a context that entails wresting the fairy tale away from the mortmain of Europe, showing that the fairy tales of Europe have their roots in a complex of international intersections, and revealing the European fairy tale to be a parochial and regional manifestation of a genre that has international and transnational scope. Though it remains in the title of this volume, therefore, the term ‘fairy tale’ appears here, as it were, under a sentence: *The Fairy Tale World* critiques applications of the term ‘fairy tale’ that entail homogenising the world’s wonder tales according to a Euro–American model or that imply a failure to appreciate or comprehend the cultural specificity of local narrative traditions, but simultaneously it holds out the possibility that this term, now so widely used in English-speaking contexts, can be reclaimed for more dispersed, more decentred, applications.

This exploration of the fairy-tale world takes place in five parts. Part I (The Formation of the Canon) seeks to examine the assumptions and practices that have informed the emergence of the fairy-tale canon, as well as to highlight and recover elements of tradition that have been ignored or marginalized in the process of canon formation. It is a principal argument of this part that the fairy tale is transnational and hybrid from its inception, and that the genre must therefore be regarded as innately international. However, contributions in this section also recognize that, in the early formation of the fairy-tale canon, international cultural materials are frequently incorporated as an act of appropriation, and the dominant canon therefore remains an expression of European economic, social and political priorities that must be exposed and resisted.

The remaining four parts of this study are organized along continental lines, though the intention, in so doing is not to place the fairy tale in strict national or regional boundaries, but to articulate the ways in which all regions of the globe have functioned as locations of intensive narrative exchange. Part II aims to explore the social and cultural roles played by *Märchen* in a selection of African and Caribbean contexts. Analysis in this section encompasses the mediation of traditional African tales by folklorists and anthropologists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, uses of *Märchen* in African writing to respond to colonial and neo-colonial cultural practices, African folk tale collection, the appropriation and adaptation of imported European and American *Märchen* in creative work in Africa, and the place of African folk and fairy tales in school curricula.

Part III concerns the uses of fairy tale in literature and visual culture across the Americas. This section focuses upon counter-cultural and ideologically resistant uses of fairy tales in America, notably by artists and writers seeking to challenge the marginalisation, denigration and exclusion of non-white groups in the conventional fairy tale, and by feminist writers, film makers and artists who use the fairy tale to contest hetero-normative and patriarchal models of gender relations. This section also aims to demonstrate that the genre of the fairy tale in the Americas is a product of diverse cultural contributions throughout the continent and so cannot be understood purely in relation to inheritances from Europe.

Part IV explores the roles played by *Märchen* in diverse Asian and Australasian settings, including India, China, Korea, Japan, and Australia. The chapters will focus, amongst other things, upon the development and significance of the magic tale in

Indian and Chinese contexts, the cultural encounters that have resulted from imperialism, migration, and globalisation in these regions, the cultural challenges involved in making use of European traditions in Australia, and adaptations of folk and fairy tales in contemporary visual culture in Korea and India.

Finally, Part V examines the social and political functions of the *Märchen* in European cultural contexts between the eighteenth century and the present. In this period, it is argued, folk and fairy tales emerge as powerful agents of ideology in Europe that are used to both inscribe and contest dominant ideas about cultural identity, race, nation, social hierarchy, and imperial mission. Equally, this section shows how writers, artists, and intellectuals in the twentieth and twenty first centuries have sought to contest dominant and normative approaches to the genre.

The treatment of the fairy tale by region is not comprehensive. Even in a relatively large collection such as this one it would be impossible to consider all the diverse cultural contexts globally in which the fairy tale has flourished. Comprehensive treatment, however, was not a goal of this collection. Rather, it has been an objective of this study to present a series of paradigmatic approaches to fairy tales worldwide that show how students of the genre may approach the international fairy tale in ways that are knowledgeable about the specificity of local cultural production, whilst simultaneously grasping the importance of global exchange in the formation of the genre. This entails a need to practice what Donald Haase calls in the present collection “critical hospitality” – the imperative to “welcome and connect with the stories of others on common ground, both on their own terms and in our own ways, wherever we might encounter them” (see this volume: 30). It also entails recognition that whilst fairy tales travel, they do not travel innocently; they travel in history, and frequently along paths determined by cultural authority. A further objective of this study, therefore, is to understand the ways in which the fairy tale reflects cultural authority, and to explore the mechanisms by which established authorities can be reinforced or contested in creative and scholarly approaches to the genre.

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PART I

THE FORMATION OF
THE CANON



CHAPTER ONE

GLOBAL OR LOCAL? WHERE DO FAIRY TALES BELONG?



Donald Haase

The sleeping girl was carried far from her people and away from those whom she loved into the lands of strangers.

(The Foreign Wife)

O my lord, there was neither here nor there.

(Allāh's Dispensation)

Like their heroes and heroines, folktales and fairy tales are wanderers. As “fiction’s natural migrants” (Teverson 2008: 54), fairy tales are famous for their journeys abroad, whether as cultural cargo carried by émigrés and travelers or as captives transported by colonizers, conquerors, and scholars “into the lands of strangers” (Bushnaq 1986: 20). That stories travel through time and space, across geographical and cultural boundaries, from teller to teller, has been a core tenet of folktale and fairy-tale studies for over 200 years, despite scholars’ use of diverse methods, theories, and terminology. Whether viewed through the lens of adaptation, appropriation, duplication, revision, retelling, remediation, remixing, relocation, intertextuality, variants and versions, or other critical terms used to explain transfer and transformation, fairy tales seem to be always already in transit, testing our understanding of their place in the world, a place that may seem “neither here nor there” (Patai 1998: 37), but everywhere, anywhere, or even – to borrow Homi Bhabha’s phrase – “in-between” (2004 [1994]).

In this essay, I consider the dislocation of folktales and fairy tales by asking: “Where do fairy tales belong?” To address that question and its corollary – “Global or local?” – I will: (1) initially discuss questions of “belonging” as they relate to folktales and fairy tales; (2) examine paratextual strategies that three late twentieth-century translations of Arab tales use to position themselves for what Robert Escarpit has called an “alien public,” an audience comprised of readers (like me in this case) who “do not have direct access to the work” or its “community of assumptions” (Escarpit 1971: 84, 78); and (3) consider how the constructedness of these English-language collections helps us negotiate the dichotomy of global and local belonging and conceptualize what globalization requires of contemporary folktale and fairy-tale scholarship.



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QUESTIONS OF BELONGING

As framed here, the question “*Where* do fairy tales belong” understands belonging, at least initially, in the sense of being “rightfully or fittingly placed in a specified location or position” (*OED Online* 2017). In spatial and geographical terms, then, this question asks whether fairy tales are most appropriately understood as being “rightfully or fittingly” situated globally or locally? “To belong” also resonates with etymologically and semantically linked verbs – such as “to pertain to,” “to be characteristic of,” and “to originate in” (*OED Online* 2017) – which enrich the question by bringing identity and a relational sense of belonging into play.

“Where do fairy tales belong?” is also a question bearing a relationship to the study of cultural property (Anderson and Geismar 2017) and to another question of belonging: “*To whom* do fairy tales belong?” When I posed that latter question in 1993, I argued that fairy tales were common property (Haase 1993b). Influenced by reader-response criticism and sociohistorical research documenting the appropriation of folktales by nineteenth-century collectors for a new audience, my essay expressed not only enthusiastic approval of the individual’s freedom to take ownership by adapting and subjectively responding to tales, but also equally enthusiastic disapproval of the ideological appropriation of folktales by the privileged and powerful. Privileging the individual reader’s response and resistance to institutional appropriation, I asserted: “It is no heresy to re-appropriate the tales from either tradition or the culture industry” (1993b: 399; see also Haase 1993a).

While I still hold that view, my focus on the fairy tale as a creative or emancipatory experience for the *reader* was based on the production and reception of Anglo-European texts and ignored the complexity inherent in taking ownership of culturally situated texts and re-presenting and responding to them in new cultural contexts. Questions of belonging become more acute when stories from marginalized and indigenous cultures or from outside the Anglo-European canon are appropriated for an alien public by collectors, editors, and translators. The geographical and cultural displacement of indigenous tales is especially evident in systems of material – and not just metaphorical – colonialism (see Bacchilega in this volume, Chapter 2), which produced problematic translations and collections that obscured the role of local scholars (Naithani 2006 and 2010) or edited tales and reframed them paratextually to “construct foreignness” (Schacker 2003: 149) and justify the colonizer’s “imperial ambitions” (Teverson 2016: 17). As a question of belonging, that displacement is captured well by Sara Hines’s assessment of Andrew Lang’s series of colored fairy books: “They may contain stories of other places, other peoples, and other cultures, but the stories have been collected, translated, and edited specifically so that white people will like them and are meant to be read from the safety and security of the British home” (Hines 2010: 54).

The postcolonial perspective has sensitized us to the infringement, distortions, and disrespect that can occur when tales of marginalized creators and cultures are displaced and framed for the benefit of new readers. Jill Terry Rudy’s study of paratexts in collections of indigenous Native American tales published between 1892 and 1929 leads her to conclude that folklore scholarship taking “its own positions as the gauge of a community and its traditions ... produces works that are diminished by skipping the connections of traditions, lands, and peoples” (Rudy 2013: 25). Encouraging a

relational approach that does not privilege the outside observers' own position, she advises contemporary folklorists to "produce and receive tale collections in ways that better evaluate how stories relate storytellers with lands and communities" (3). Understanding how compilers position that relationship and negotiate the question of belonging is critical to what I have described as "decolonizing fairy-tale studies" and developing a "responsible form of transcultural fairy-tale research" (Haase 2010: 29).

POSITIONING TALES IN TRANSLATION

The three Arab folktale collections I draw on here were issued by North American publishers between 1986 and 1998 for an English-speaking audience: Inea Bushnaq's Pantheon edition of *Arab Folktales* (1986); Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana's *Speak, Bird, Speak Again: Palestinian Arab Folktales* (1989); and Raphael Patai's *Arab Folktales from Palestine and Israel* (1998). My decision to consider collections of Arab tales in translation, despite having no specific expertise in Arab folklore or competence in Arabic, reflects my interest in positioning myself as part of the intended audience outside the tales' linguistic, geographical, and sociocultural settings. So situated, I do not focus on translation itself but on paratextual commentary and framing to understand how collectors, editors, and translators (who may inhabit more than one of these roles) position folktales for English-speaking readers and address the question of where they belong.

To ask where Arab tales belong may seem a tall order, given the widespread locations, many local cultures, and vernaculars involved (see Marzolph 2016: 57–8). The publisher of Inea Bushnaq's *Arab Folktales* maps that collection's coverage of "the sprawling Arab world" by describing the settings and widespread geographical locations from which the tales hail:

Out of the alleys of Cairo and Bedouin camps comes a brand-new selection of one hundred and thirty tales of the desert, palace, village, and bazaar: a vibrant tapestry as huge and exotic as the sprawling Arab world it covers, from North Africa to the Holy Land.

(Bushnaq 1986: dust jacket, front flap)

While calling the far-flung corpus of Arab folktales "exotic" might seem to signal that the collection is framed by an Orientalist fantasy, it is not. Instead, this description establishes that place is paramount for these tales, which, having been taken "out of" urban alleys and nomadic camps, are "of the desert, palace, village, and bazaar." The apprehension of folktales as locally situated – be it in a landscape or terrain, community, social setting, or some other physical site – is evident in the paratextual framing of all three collections, whose editors respect the connection among stories, place, and community by reconstructing for readers a sense of place, so that they can apprehend and appreciate its significance.

Anthropologists have written about the constructedness of place (Basso 1996) and the production of locality (Appadurai 1995), which allow the apprehension of belonging to a geographical space or identifying with it. That apprehension of belonging – and its connection to place and a sense of identity – is explained by Keith H. Basso, using an organic metaphor, in this way:

Fueled by sentiments of inclusion, belonging, and connectedness to the past, sense of place roots individuals in the social and cultural soils from which they have sprung together, holding them there in the grip of a shared identity, a localized version of selfhood.

(Basso 1996: 145–6)

Basso's view seems to describe place, identity, and geographical belonging as they are represented in Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana's Palestinian folktale collection, *Speak Bird, Speak Again*. In her exemplary analyses of *Speak Bird, Speak Again*, Farah Aboubakr has demonstrated how the discourse of peasant storytellers and the compilers' paratextual commentaries reconstruct geographical places and settings, reaffirming sites of cultural memory essential to the national and cultural identity of Palestinians (Aboubakr 2014, 2017). When Aboubakr writes that "the folktale can represent a folkloric landmark for Palestinians' cultural memory" (Aboubakr 2017: 226), and that, "[l]ike maps, the folktales help Palestinian readers and listeners to recreate and mobilize their memory of geographic locations" (234), she uses cartographical instead of organic metaphors; but she confirms nonetheless that Muhawi and Kanaana's commentaries, as well as the folktales they compiled in *Speak Bird, Speak Again*, validate the view that the folktale's construction of place allows for the reader's apprehension of local belonging.

The view that Palestinian folktales belong *in* Palestine and *to* Palestinians reflects the significance of land to a people who live in exile and under occupation. "As a result of displacement and persistent struggle over land," writes Aboubakr, "Palestinians are conscious of the necessity to reaffirm sites of memory and recreate maps of memory" (Aboubakr 2017: 228). The folktales translated by Muhawi and Kanaana constitute such "maps of memory," and through them "knowledge of the land demonstrates the authority of Palestinians in general and Palestinian storytellers in particular over their identity and belonging despite their situation" (Aboubakr 2017: 229). Who may authoritatively lay claim to folktales clearly parallels the question of where folktales belong. Moreover, the displacement of the Palestinians from their homeland parallels the potential displacement of the tales as well, leading Aboubakr to observe that

Muhawi and Kanaana's work is not simply a disinterested record of Palestinian culture, society, and folklore but rather a scholarly and potentially subversive attempt to document, safeguard, and give voice to Palestinian oral culture before Western, Arab, and Palestinian readers.

(Aboubakr 2017: 223)

In other words, by foregrounding the *local* pertinence of the tales compiled in their English translation and its Arabic counterpart, Muhawi and Kanaana have tried to inoculate readers – Western, Arab, and Palestinian – against non-authoritative or, better, less locally informed appropriations that might disrupt, to echo the terms of Rudy's relational argument above, the connection among the folktales, the land, and the community.

Indeed, Palestinian scholars Muhawi and Kanaana are knowledgeable specialists in literature and anthropology, respectively; and they equip readers with an extensive paratextual apparatus to convey social, cultural, and literary information pertinent

to the tales they collected from Palestinian storytellers between 1978 and 1980. In their introduction, the compilers explain that in their footnotes and in afterwords following each grouping of stories, their “concern ... is to present the general features of Palestinian culture that inform the tales – that is, the common assumptions that hold narrators, audience, and material together” (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989: 12). In this context, Muhawi and Kanaana seek to give English-language readers an understanding of the relation among stories, storytellers, Palestinian listeners, their culture, and their land.

Similarly, the paratextual frames of Inea Bushnaq’s *Arab Folktales* and Raphael Patai’s *Arab Folktales from Palestine and Israel* give readers pertinent information about the tales’ social and cultural settings to reinforce this understanding of the tales’ local belonging. The strategies used in all three collections to situate the tales for English-language readers are telling, not only in the way they affirm the stories’ relation to their place of origin, but also because they ultimately – even inevitably – position the tales beyond the local in relation to their English-speaking audience.

A Palestinian–American born in Jerusalem and educated in classics at Cambridge University, Bushnaq presents 128 tales, drawing with few exceptions on Arabic texts from editions of oral tales published between 1868 and 1979, as well as on recordings she herself had collected (Bushnaq 1986: 380–3). Acknowledging that she is “unwilling to encumber this collection with annotation in the back,” Bushnaq opts instead to provide the “information necessary to understanding the stories either in the introductions to each section or the narratives themselves” (382). Because the collected tales represent the diversity of the “sprawling Arab world,” that cultural information ranges widely, from the values of generosity and hospitality pervading Bedouin tales to the culture of honor “that has resulted in the severe seclusion of Moslem women” (312) and motivated subversive tales told by and about “wily women” (309–13).

Hungarian–Jewish anthropologist and folklorist Raphael Patai’s *Arab Folktales from Palestine and Israel* also uses paratexts to position the 28 tales he has translated and annotated in 1998, based on existing sources. Focusing on “Arab folktales recorded at three different times under very different circumstances in Palestine and Israel” (Patai 1998: 2), Patai situates and contextualizes his corpus locally, temporally, and politically, not only via the book’s tripartite historical organization (1910–1911, 1946–1947, and 1982–1984), but also in its introduction and in the comments and notes following each tale. Through both his literal translation of Arab texts and these paratexts, Patai seeks “to elucidate for the Western reader what [the original] telling-and-listening experience must have been” and “to supply the reader with the necessary linguistic and cultural context for understanding and enjoyment” (Patai 1998: 7). Consistent with that goal and proceeding from the premise that “the setting in which events related by the folktale take place inevitably reflects the sociocultural environment of the storytellers and their listeners” (10), Patai undertakes “to present the Arab folktale as an invaluable source of knowledge of the mental world of traditional Arab culture” (7). To that end he devotes his commentary, which focuses primarily on family relationships, to “the sociocultural patterns of the society *in which the tale is at home*” (11; emphasis mine). Of course, unlike Bushnaq, Muhawi, and Kanaana, Patai himself is not himself “at home” in Palestinian society; and Ulrich Marzolph detects in his commentaries the “paternalistic attitude” of an outside observer who does

not belong to the community and bases his explanations on meticulous scholarship uninformed by personal experience (1999: 346–7; my translation). In contrast, Galit Hasan-Rokem claims in her review that “Patai’s work in this volume expresses respect for the cultural and national identity of the community whose tales he anthologizes, as well as sensitivity to the complex historical situation in which the narratives are embedded” (1999: 79). In either case, the translator-editor’s own positioning raises similarly important questions about belonging, ownership, and authority, especially given the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the disputed homeland.

That said, the apprehension of a tale’s local belonging – where it is “at home” – and the appreciation of the localized storytelling experience that all three collections strive to create for the Western reader do not rely on informative commentary alone. Consider Patai’s statement that he has

tried ... to present a selection of Palestinian–Israeli Arab folktales translated as faithfully to the original as possible, thus preserving much of the stories’ original atmosphere and allowing what the German biblical scholar Hugo Gressman[n] once called Palestine’s *Erdgeruch* (“earth-smell”) to come through their English garb.

(Patai 1998: 6–7)

Patai’s metaphorical language exposes a sensory turn – an esthetic aspiration – that would go beyond sober explanations of cultural information and transform the reader’s understanding of the tale’s relation to the teller, the people, and the land into an *experience* of it. Patai’s desire to preserve “much of the original atmosphere” and empower English to exude the “earth-smell” of the Arab folktales’ geographical setting – the literal ground from which it arises – suggests the frustrating limits translators and editors face when trying to recreate the local “in the land of strangers.” As a scholar practiced in the discourse of intellectual understanding and as a Hungarian Jew whose native language is not Arabic, Patai is himself positioned as an outsider at the site where Arab tales are told. He indicates as much when he opens his introduction with a personal experience narrative:

One of my earliest memories from Arab Jerusalem dates back to 1933 when, on a Ramadan night, my friend Sheikh Aḥmad al-Kinānī took me to a café in the Old City to listen to a *qaṣṣāṣ* (storyteller) ... My knowledge of colloquial Arabic was at the time rather limited. I did not understand much of what the storyteller said, so that my attention wandered, and I concentrated on the people sitting around rather than on the performer.

(Patai 1998: 1)

Patai goes on to describe the sights and sounds of the storytelling scene, including “the rapt attention with which the all-male audience listened to [the] stories” as they “smoked (drank) narghiles, alternating with small cups of black coffee” (Patai 1998: 1). As an imperfect intermediary for the Arab storytellers who told the tales he has translated, Patai foregrounds his own outsider status (and that of his Western readers) and uses descriptive narrative instead of cultural information to evoke the physical setting, community, and sensory experience in which the tales are at home.

This strategy, however, is not simply a function of Patai's outsider status. In *Arab Folktales*, Bushnaq's paratextual frame also employs sensory descriptions and narrative vignettes throughout to conjure the locations of storytelling. The volume's introduction, suggestively titled "Embroidery with Word and Thread," opens as a fictional narrative might, with a descriptive visual image constructing a sense of people and place:

Arab village women walking home from the spring, heavy water jars balanced at a slight angle on their heads, long gowns swaying with the movement of their stride, can well be likened to date palms and gazelles and sugarcane and young mares, as they are in their folktales.

(Bushnaq 1986: xiii)

The simile at the heart of this image identifies the unity of the people, the indigenous plant and animal life of their geographic home, and their folktales.

Just as Patai introduced his collection with a memory of his storytelling experience in a Jerusalem coffee house, so does Bushnaq place at the end of her collection a personal recollection – rich in sensory descriptors – of storytelling in her West Bank home:

Though there were thick iron bars in the windows and solid stone walls in the room where we slept as children, and often there were six and even ten of us, visiting cousins and second cousins, crowded on the mattresses on the floor, Hamda, the servant girl, never failed to make us shiver with fright. She could sniff, mmmpph! through her large nostrils in such a way that as we stared in the dimness of the kerosene night-light, she turned into the giant who smelled that there was a tasty human morsel hiding in his house. Six-year-old blood ran cold at her account of the hairy-faced Ghoul whose hot red eyes could burn. So night after night we pestered her for "one more story" – just to feel again the delicious prickle down our spines.

(Bushnaq 1986: 379)

Drawing on all five senses and synesthesia to describe the storytelling setting she remembers, Bushnaq frames both the tales and her cultural commentary in sensory imagery, suggesting that intellectual understanding falls short of the experiential nature of a tale's belonging: "Throughout, my aim has been to present the English reader with a story as *colorful and comprehensible* as possible that is at the same time true to the spirit of the teller" (Bushnaq 1986: xxvi; emphasis mine). The tales, in other words, should be not only as *comprehensible* to non-native readers but also as *colorful* – sensuously or esthetically accessible – as possible. Bushnaq signals, however, that even with her colorful paratextual descriptions of Arab peoples, customs, and landscapes, her translations will not alter the fact that the Western reader remains situated as an outsider looking in. As she writes in her introduction to Bedouin tales,

[t]he reader who has not supped cardamom-scented coffee in the breezy shade of a goat-hair tent – in Arabic, *beit shaar*, house of hair – will glimpse in this section a way of life which dates back over a thousand years.

(Bushnaq 1986: 3; emphasis mine)

What is possible, then, is but a "glimpse."

Although Muhawi and Kanaana typically eschew rich sensuous imagery when describing the storytelling settings (1989: 5–8), they do want to offer more than intellectual understanding of the tales’ grounding “in the culture from which they arise” (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989: 12). As Aboubakr says of their annotations providing information on Palestinian landscape and geography, “[t]he aim is to give a picturesque context to the plot of the folktale, so that readers’ visualization and imagination are triggered” (Aboubakr 2017: 228). Moreover, despite their extensive scholarly scaffolding, the compilers consciously position their commentaries and notes *after* instead of *before* their translations “in order not to interfere with the reader’s individual response to the tales” (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989: 51). Similarly, they “hope that the enjoyment of a first reading will not be interrupted by the footnotes” (51). With this their premise of local belonging takes a notable turn – a turn that is characteristic of all three collections to varying degrees.

Paradoxically, complementing the delivery of cultural information with descriptive narrative, sensory imagery, and picturesque context that stimulates the reader’s imagination, comprises an esthetic effort that simultaneously establishes a sense of local belonging *and* transcends it. “Enjoyment of a first reading” – the reader’s pleasure in the text – seems to be independent of the contextualized understanding that the compilers cultivate in their paratexts. While Muhawi and Kanaana seem to uncouple the information and context required for understanding from enjoyment, Patai does not, remarking, “[m]y notes are intended to supply the reader with the necessary linguistic and cultural context for understanding *and* enjoyment” (Patai 1998: 7; emphasis mine). Patai also opts for translations that privilege cultural understanding over a style that would be familiar or pleasing to an English-speaking reader but might obscure cultural insights. I infer this distinction between a foreignizing and domesticating translation when Patai contrasts his admittedly literal renderings with Bushnaq’s more creative approach to “show how a ‘free’ translation [like hers] can occasionally hide a mental construct that forms an important element in popular thinking” (Patai 1998: 6). For her part, Bushnaq admits to privileging the pleasure of reading a satisfying narrative over fidelity to her sources: “if the imagery for the hero’s courage and beauty in one version was forceful while his adventures were lamely told, I combined two texts to produce one satisfying story” (Bushnaq 1986: 382).

Each collection negotiates in its own way the difference between understanding and enjoyment – and, consequently, between the local and the global. The most considered and nuanced position, however, is articulated in *Speak Bird, Speak Again*. Despite their overriding interest in localizing their folktales paratextually, Muhawi and Kanaana – the translators with the most enduring personal connection to the storytellers, society, culture, location, and stories they personally collected and translated – encourage readers to take at least provisional ownership of the stories for the sake of pleasure and to indulge their subjective responses. “It would be wrong,” Muhawi and Kanaana caution,

to start out with the assumption that the tales merely reflect the culture, or that the culture constitutes the subject matter of the tales, for then their interest would be strictly regional, limited to the cultural area from which they came. Rather, the forms of these tales, which are derivable directly from the Arabic and Semitic

traditions in folk narrative, are related also to the Indo-European tradition, with which they share recognizable plot patterns (as identified by Aarne-Thompson type numbers).

(1989: 11)

Note that Muhawi and Kanaana qualify the strict regional belonging of Arab folktales by viewing them in relation to similar tales from the Indo-European tradition. In fact, unable to take advantage of Hasan El-Shamy's *Folk Traditions of the Arab World: A Guide to Motif Classification* (1995) and *Types of the Folktale in the Arab World* (2004), both *Speak Bird, Speak Again* and Patai's *Arab Folktales from Palestine and Israel* place their tales into a global corpus with the help of Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955–1958) and Antti Aarne and Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* (1987 [1961]) – arguably Eurocentric classification systems (see, e.g. El-Shamy 2004: xxvii, xix; also Uther 2004: 1: 7–8). As Aboubakr points out, Muhawi and Kanaana seek “to reveal the link between Palestinian heritage and Arab heritage, and to link both to universal and human civilization” (Aboubakr 2014: 58). Moreover, by positioning their tales as local adaptations of Aarne-Thompson tale types, they not only imply a glocalised view of the stories but also explicitly affirm their esthetic construction, encouraging readers “to appreciate them as works of art” (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989: 12). Patai, who spent 254 pages trying to recreate the “earth smell” of Arab folktales, devotes his entire afterword to “the place of these tales within the global spectrum of oral folklore of which they unquestionably form a part” (Patai 1998: 255). In fact, his final word on the Arab tales he has otherwise framed locally is his claim that one of the “major tasks” facing folklorists is to “incorporate the folk tradition of the Arabs into that great global treasure house of human culture that contains the folktales of all the world's nations” (258). Whereas these two scholarly collections take pains to look beyond the tale's regional provenance and pertinence, Bushnaq's *Arab Folktales* – the compilation most likely to find a general audience of English-readers – makes little effort to position its stories in relation to either Western or global touchstones. Even so, the urge to portray folktales as universal and timeless sources of enjoyment and esthetic satisfaction persists. The last word of Bushnaq's collection belongs to Edward Said on the back cover, where he not only lauds the book's authenticity and evocation of the Arab “people's spirit,” but also assures Westerners readers of its timelessness: “This is a book to be read and re-read many times: its pleasures are of the ages” (Bushnaq 1986: back outside flap).

The path from local to global, and to the accompanying notions of universality and timelessness, reflects the conceptual and rhetorical challenge of doing justice to the question of belonging. American folklorist Alan Dundes illustrates this near the end of his foreword to *Speak Bird, Speak Again* when reminding readers that Palestinian Arab folktales come from a site of conflict over questions of belonging and ownership:

These tales belong to a people, the Palestinian Arabs. Whatever one's view is of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, it cannot be denied that the event caused considerable dislocation and fragmentation of the Palestinian Arab people. It is somewhat analogous to the colonial powers in earlier times claiming

territory which was already occupied. It is perhaps a tragic irony of history that the Jews, who themselves have been forced by bigotry and prejudice to wander from country to country seeking even temporary sanctuary, have through the formation of a “homeland” caused another people to become homeless. Although this complex issue has engendered great emotion on all sides, one fact is beyond dispute: there was once an area of the world called Palestine, where the Arab inhabitants had – and have – a distinctive culture all their own.

(Muhawi and Kanaana 1989: xiii)

Driving home the importance of acknowledging and respecting the tales as local expressions of Palestinian culture, Dundes then makes a rhetorical transition and conceptual transformation as marvelous as the fairy tales he invokes:

It is that culture that is preserved so beautifully in the magical stories contained in this volume. In this context, all people, regardless of political persuasion, should be able to appreciate the value of these magnificent folktales: as oral products of the creative spirit of the human mind, they belong not just to the Palestinian Arab community but to all humankind.

(Muhawi and Kanaana 1989: xiii)

Tales initially described as the property of the Palestinian people are rhetorically transformed into the common property of “all humankind.” The tales’ elevation to global status appears to result from a magical turn, for the “magnificent folktales” that preserve distinctive local culture are ultimately “magical stories,” “products of the creative spirit of the human mind.” This evocative language frees the tales from the constraints of their physical location and positions them as creations belonging to the intangible realm of the human spirit.

Bushnaq and Patai do not make this conceptual and rhetorical turn as explicitly as Dundes does on behalf of Muhawi and Kanaana. Recognizing the apparent incongruity between the tales’ local belonging and their “fantastic settings” (Patai 1998: 7), Patai draws on Western science fiction and classical fairy tales to argue that even the fabulous requires oral storytellers to “work with the building blocks found in the physical, social, and emotional worlds of their surroundings” (9). Nonetheless, he concludes his introduction with universalizing language that intimates the modern Arab tale’s imaginative power to “move its protagonists from one world into the other and back again,” proving the ability of the tales to “span two worlds and, in doing so, create a new world that has never before existed anywhere” (26) – a world without place.

Addressing stories of magic and the supernatural, Bushnaq also confirms that both the real and magical worlds are locally grounded when she explains that the Djinn, or spirits, “are as much a part of the landscape as the heroes” (1986: 67). Still, when she writes that “[m]uch of the excitement in the tales of magic lies in the removal of the boundary between the two worlds” (67), she locates the reader’s excitement – their heightened imaginative response and enjoyment of the tale – in a time and space that erase boundaries and create a new borderless space. This rhetorical intersection of enjoyment, magic, and the human imagination ultimately relocates the folktale conceptually in the context of esthetic experience.

It is one of the virtues of *Speak Bird, Speak Again*, that Muhawi and Kanaana explicitly treat the relationship of the physical and supernatural with more nuance than Bushnaq and Patai. As Muhawi and Kanaana point out, their collection includes “only the type of tale known in the Palestinian dialect as *hikaye* or *xurrafiyye* – that is, ‘folktale’ proper” (1989: 1) – drawing on the Aarne-Thompson category (aka “ordinary folktale”) that includes stories described variously as *Märchen*, wonder tale, and fairy tale. The term *hikaye*, they explain, “puts the emphasis on the mimetic, or artistic, aspect of narration, whereas *xurrafiyye* (properly translated, ‘fabula’) is derived from a root stressing its ‘fabulous,’ or ‘fictitious,’ aspect” (1). The telling of a fabulous tale, they explain, is “an esthetic occasion” and typically the domain of women: “The introductory formula ushers the audience into a space radically different from the space outside,” and the narrative allows “the element of fantasy ... to take over the listeners’ imaginations and help them break from ordinary experience ... until the closing formula brings them back to the world of everyday reality” (5). According to the compilers, “[t]he tale creates a time and space set apart from the rest of life in which events and transformations, because they have no equivalent in experience, can be understood only by the imagination and not by rational thought” (6).

While this understanding of the *xurrafiyye* seems to contradict the folktale’s strictly local belonging, Muhawi and Kanaana later reposition it with a more complex view:

By weaving the super-real into the fabric of the real, folk narrative asserts the primacy of the imagination, creating a dialectical relationship between the supernatural and the physical. It also closes the door on facile or one-dimensional interpretations, lending the action a timeless quality by placing it neither fully in the real nor in the realm only of the supernatural.

(1989: 41)

Ultimately, then, Muhawi and Kanaana consciously position the folktale in relation to the physical world *and* the fabulous space it creates. It is “timeless” not in the sense that it becomes entirely dislocated from its local-temporal setting and universalized, but in the sense that as an imaginative creation the folktale belongs to both physical and fabulous spaces – more precisely, that it is located “neither fully in the real nor in the realm only of the supernatural.” This view may blur or even erase the boundaries between local and global, but not the pertinence of the realms themselves, leaving us to ask again: Where do fairy tales belong?

FINAL THOUGHTS

What does the paratextual construction of belonging in these three English-language collections of Arab folktales tell us about where fairy tales belong? For one thing, it is evident that coming to grips with belonging is a challenging theoretical and rhetorical task for translator-editors who are sensitive to both their indigenous sources and their alien readers. Recognizing their scholarly and ethical responsibilities to locate folktales and fairy tales in their rightful sociocultural contexts, and to connect new readers with the source culture and community, editors cannot ultimately control how those narratives are received. Readers cannot be compelled to “read the instructions.”

Moreover, however carefully compilers might guide readers toward a localized understanding, their paratextual strategies also lead to other contexts that accommodate different modes of reading and a sense of global belonging. The translator-editors discussed here are not just knowledgeable interlocutors mediating between the local community and an alien public. They are creative agents who combine scholarly commentary, ethnographic descriptions, sensuous imagery, and personal experience narratives to construct their collections as texts in their own right. Each collection is a transitional-transcultural space that allows target readers multiple points of access and attempts to resolve its own intractable position of insisting that tales derive their significance from their local provenance while validating their global interconnections with other types, texts, and audiences. In that respect, what I wrote in 2010 about colonialist collections also applies to these collections of Arab tales. Like the “acts of trespass” in colonialist translations, the acts of dislocation in these three collections “produce something new – a transcultural text that communicates more than the sum of its cultural parts” (30).

The collections’ ambivalent paratextual commentaries, their dialectical movement between the local and global, and their construction of a new space of transcultural interaction militate against a simplistic or definitive answer to the question “Where do fairy tales belong?” and its bipolar corollary “Global or local?” Contesting the bipolar contrast of local and global by blurring the boundaries allows compilers to construct a collection that encourages a multifaceted understanding and experiences of the fairy tale’s potential to connect with readers. It also enables a constructive critique of the sociocultural approach, the engine of modern fairy-tale studies which must continue to evolve and come to grips with the impact of globalization.

Introducing an issue of the *PMLA* devoted to “Literature in the World,” Simon Gikandi has observed that

we live in an age when the desire or demand for world literature is connected to the meaning of the imaginary in a world in the throes of globalization. Indeed, a major justification for the recuperation of Goethe’s idea of *Weltliteratur* (world literature) in the present is that globalization gives us no choice but to insist on the provenance of literature outside national boundaries.

(Gikandi 2016: 1199)

I do not cite Gikandi to frame global belonging or ownership of folktales and fairy tales specifically in terms of “world literature.” Indeed, as he notes, “[t]he harshest criticism of the paradigm of world literature ... is leveled against what is seen as its deafness, or indifference, to localized literary histories” (1119). I cite him instead to emphasize what globalization means for folktale and fairy-tale studies, which since their inception have relied on theories, tools, and methods of classification, analysis, and history based on national, ethnic, and cultural belonging that has been overwhelmingly Eurocentric. The discipline requires a global – in both senses of the word – reorientation that replaces the hegemonic systems of knowledge and history of the fairy tale and accommodates both local and global provenance without succumbing to rigid dualities or grand clichés, including what Cristina Bacchilega has called “the delusion of universality” (Bacchilega 2013: 45).

In the epilogue to her important book *Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder*, Bacchilega surveys numerous scholars who, like her, have contributed to this reorientation by opposing a “European-centered history of the genre” and developing a “new cartography of knowledge and genre [that] is pivotal to effecting such a displacement” (Bacchilega 2013: 200–1). Among those is the Kenyan postcolonial writer and scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, whose book *Globalectics* (2012) is especially useful for thinking about where fairy tales belong.

Globalectics, Ngũgĩ explains, “combines the global and the dialectical to describe a mutually affecting dialogue, or multi-logue, in the phenomena of nature and nurture in a global space that’s rapidly transcending that of the artificially bounded, as nation and region” (Ngũgĩ 2012: 8). As a multivocal, decentralizing theory, globalectics grew out of Ngũgĩ’s experience of “the vast literatures in Africa, Asia, and Latin America” (25), which were absent from literary studies defined “within purely national boundaries” (42) and dominated by canonical European authors. “Where,” he wondered upon returning to the English department at the University of Nairobi in 1967, “was the place of the vast literature that I had now become aware of?” (26).

Expressing a postcolonial critique of literary studies, Ngũgĩ’s question and the theory it generated are nonetheless significant for thinking about the fairy tale’s place in an age of globalization. Where do the many non-Western, non-canonical folktales and fairy tales that are becoming increasingly available in translation and via the internet belong? What are the consequences for a Western-centric discipline and its canon in a space no longer defined nationally and regionally? How will, or should, translators and editors position tales for new readers? These questions – and in part their answers – strike me as implicit in the ambivalence and in the conceptual and rhetorical turns we saw in the three collections of Arab tales.

The tendency to shift between local and global contexts in those collections, as well as their invitations – stated or implied – to “skip the footnotes” and respond imaginatively and with enjoyment to the esthetic elements of the translations, reflect Ngũgĩ’s multifaceted and liberating view of literature in a global context:

Works of imagination are amazingly antinational even where the author may think she or he is espousing national themes. People identify with a good tale and the characters irrespective of the tale’s region of origins. Like a mirror or a camera, a work of art may reveal more than consciously intended. Works of imagination refuse to be bound within national geographies; they leap out of nationalist prisons and find welcoming fans outside the geographic walls. But they can also encounter others who want to put them back within the walls, as if they were criminals on the loose.

Equally important, if not more so, are approaches to the text, how we read it. Do we want to welcome it or do we want to put it back into prison – or even a new prison? One can read a literary text with a narrow, short, or wide angle of view. It makes a difference whether one’s view is through a concave or convex lens.

(Ngũgĩ 2012: 58)

This empowering view of imaginative works speaks to their power and potential, their resistance to demarcation and confinement. It speaks not only of people’s ability

to “identify with a good tale” – to connect to it – regardless of its “region of origin,” but also of the choices we have to tap its potential – to approach and read it in different ways, through any one of multiple lenses.

My reading of the internal dynamics in the paratextual frames constructed by Bushnaq, Patai, and Muhawi and Kanaana confirms the resistance of folktales and fairy tales to the constraint of a one-dimensional belonging. Compilers would be hard pressed to restrict their collected tales to their region of origin, or to prevent their leaping out to “find welcoming fans outside the geographic walls.” In fact, the compilers’ paratextual commentaries, to varying degrees, acknowledge the tales’ resistance and the potential they have for readers beyond those walls.

Steve Zeitlin seems to echo this when he writes of storytelling itself, “[b]oth tellers and listeners need to move from uncompromising, hallowed ground to common ground. Perhaps if we tell stories that people on both sides can fall in love with and be transformed by, they can perceive some common values underlying the tales” (Zeitlin 2015: 30). Zeitlin may be right that we should seek common values and understand common ground as a universalizing location. I prefer, however, to think of common ground as that new space in which connections are made, a new, imaginative space that can “bring about different results and different perspectives, yielding, at the very least, different possibilities in literature” (Ngũgĩ 2012: 8).

When Ngũgĩ says, “[i]n the end, literature is a collective contribution to the human” (8), he is not universalizing literary works or erasing diversity and difference as a response to globalization. Rather, he is celebrating them and affirming their rightful and equal places in the global corpus. Relentless globalization and the fairy tale’s inevitable *Wanderlust* speak to the futility of building walls and to the responsibility we have to practice critical hospitality, to welcome and connect with the stories of others on common ground, both on their own terms and in our own ways, wherever we might encounter them.

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CHAPTER TWO

‘DECOLONIZING’ THE CANON

Critical challenges to Eurocentrism



Cristina Bacchilega

Considering how both colonialism and colonality have impacted constructions of the fairy-tale canon, this essay argues that ‘decolonizing’ the canon is a situated process that involves putting pressure on the fairy tale’s relationship to other genres and the uses to which different communities of practice put it. In primary sites for canon formation and revision such as fairy-tale courses, histories, and anthologies, to challenge Eurocentrism has meant approaching fairy tales transnationally, foregrounding the work of translation, recognizing the power of fairy tales and related genres to make us think otherwise, and leveraging activist uses of the genre to redefine it. Whereas these moves do important work towards ‘decolonizing’ the canon, this essay begins by reflecting on links and gaps between metaphorical and material decolonization.

WHY ‘DECOLONIZING’?

It is quite fitting that in 2008 Donald Haase delivered the paper that was to grow into his essay “Decolonizing Fairy-Tale Studies” at “Folktales and Fairy Tales: Translation, Colonialism, and Cinema,” an international symposium held in Hawai‘i, a colonized and occupied nation. At the time, I recognized the paper’s game-changing potential for fairy-tale studies but, as I shared with the author on email, I also felt uncomfortable with the call for “decolonizing” a discipline (personal communication November 30, 2008). Living and teaching in Hawai‘i as a non-white settler had made me acutely aware of how “decolonization is not a metaphor,” to quote the title of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang’s later essay where they caution that “decolonizing the mind is the first step not the only step” towards overthrowing colonialism (2012: 19). I remain mindful, in what I hope is a healthy unsettling way, of deploying decolonization as a metaphor.

Years of reading and teaching Haase’s “Decolonizing Fairy-Tale Studies” have convinced me that his metaphor does important work. Drawing on Sadhana Naithani’s research in particular, Haase sought to shake up the lasting legacy of European colonialism in the study of folk and fairy-tale collections today, going on to suggest that “an initial step” in promoting a “responsible form of transcultural fairy-tale research” would demand that “we resist the twin urges to universalize traditional

narratives at the expense of their specific historical and sociocultural contexts and to generalize the European fairy tale as an ahistorical global genre” (2010: 19). By pointing scholars’ attention to the complexity of fairy-tale textuality in transcultural contexts, then, Haase’s essay brought to the fore how claiming the universality of the genre and holding European tales as constitutive of the genre are two sides of a coin that has us buying into an ahistorical and prescriptive idea of the fairy tale, one that ignores and thus naturalizes the *colonial history* of folk and fairy-tale exchange and entanglements across cultures.

Decolonization is a complex and ongoing practice that involves “psychological, spiritual, spatial, political” flows of change (Tuhivai Smith 1999: 117). It is a process that includes, in fact demands, a paradigm shift in education, disciplinary formations, and research methods. In the case of ‘decolonizing’ the fairy-tale canon, “subverting, expanding, rereading, reconceiving, replacing, or displacing” it (Haase 2019) may very well contribute to the project of challenging Eurocentrism, especially if these moves are a first step toward ‘decolonizing’ this field of study by calling for a geopolitical and philosophical redefinition of the genre, its history, and future. But the question remains, is this critical project guided by a commitment on the part of settler scholars to support Indigenous self-determination as it ranges from rhetorical sovereignty to, most significantly, land restitution? There can be no singular answer to this question, but I ask it to highlight how metaphorical ‘decolonization’ is a large umbrella category that may be, but is not necessarily, tied to prioritizing the perspectives and agendas of colonized people today, or to building alliances with them in and out of the academy. In my experience, ‘decolonizing’ the fairy-tale canon as a scholarly project often assumes a postcolonial stance (Teverson 2016a), and while this stance does not relegate colonialism to the past, it can feed a desire to ignore present-day settler colonialism (Wolfe 2006). Notably in the creative arts, as I elaborate later, postcolonial *and* indigenous projects seek to ‘decolonize’ the fantastic.

If, as I suggest, ‘decolonizing’ the fairy-tale canon is a scholarly project deeply invested in historicizing the genre as well as in shaping the future of the discipline, it matters to recognize its limitations and even question its current limits. This does not mean we should not pursue ‘decolonization’ as a critical project; but that recognizing just how different postcolonial, settler, and Native positions and agendas are in relation to structures of power matters, not only for highlighting historical processes of exploitation, but for building a less inequitable future in cultural as well as political contexts. Understood in these ways, a broad sense of ‘decolonization’ addresses concerns and stories of variedly oppressed communities of practice, and builds on an intersectional anticolonial critique (Sailiata 2015: 302) to strengthen a politics of relation rather than opposition.

FAIRY-TALE ENTANGLEMENTS WITH COLONIALISM AND COLONIALITY

The *conte de fées* genre was named in France at the end of the seventeenth century. The genre’s European features, concerns, and development do not only inform contemporary popular understandings of what a fairy tale is, but also historically shaped the reception, translation, and genrefication of traditional stories that colonizers encountered across the globe, starting in the early modern period in the Americas

and continuing into nineteenth-century classic forms of colonialism and later US imperialism. This historical process is particularly well documented in the case of Eurocentric reframings of the *Arabian Nights* (Horte 2017; Marzolph 2016; Warner 2011) and of tales from India (Naithani 2010), whereas there is further need for research in other areas, including the colonial translations of Aboriginal (Do Rozario 2011) and Native American (Rudy 2013) stories into English and their relation to the fairy tale.

Colonial infrastructures and projects vary. In India, for instance, the amateur folklorists’ practice of collecting and translating was often facilitated by colonial government agents and also relied on the multilingual expertise of educated Indian intellectuals (Naithani 2010). In Hawai‘i, the work of appropriation by American authors like W.D. Westervelt was masked as preservation of a disappearing Native people’s narratives and utilized to support the annexation of Hawai‘i to the USA (Bacchilega 2007). Whether emerging from settler colonial contexts or not, however, nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century colonial printed collections of colonized peoples’ stories became canonized texts that continue to hold some authority thanks to their international distribution, reprinting, and – based on their expired copyright – current accessibility on the internet. These texts, which were in most cases written not for the people whose stories they represented, came to stand for the totality of those people’s storying, which not only reinforced the perception that the Natives/colonized belonged to the past, but also placed their stories as subordinate to the much more varied European narratives. Stories with provenance from the colonies were mined to bolster a Eurocentric fairy-tale canon – as the different projects of *Arabian Nights* translations and Andrew Lang’s many-hued *Fairy Books* (1889–1910) show – in ways that sustained and exploited Orientalist and racialized fantasies of the Other.

New editions and translations of non-European narratives that take into account the entanglements of the fairy-tale genre with Orientalism and colonialism (e.g. Haddawy 1990; Haring 2007, 2013; Naithani 2006; Narayan 2002; Tarnowska 2010) thus advance, both individually and cumulatively, the project of ‘decolonizing’ the canon instead of adding – as many collections continue to do – to “the reduction, fixing, and, ultimately, containment of difference within the context of popular multicultural politics” (Lau 2000: 71). Editions and translations of European tales also have a role to play in the more broadly conceived anti-colonial project of undermining the authority of the “classic” European tale and especially the authority of the Perrault-Grimm-Andersen-Disney quadrumvirate in popular culture. Some translations (Zipes ed. and trans. 2014, Jones ed. and trans. 2016) give new visibility to the complex textuality and ideology of tales by the Grimms and Charles Perrault – thus shaking their canonization as self-contained humanistic treasure. By making accessible less known European fairy tales, such as Giambattista Basile’s early-modern ones (Canepa ed. and trans. 2007) and those collected in Sicily by Laura Gonzenbach and Giuseppe Pitre (Messerli ed. and trans. 1998, Zipes ed. and trans. 2017), other translations support a more transnational and multi-directional history of the genre within Europe and expand it to the Mediterranean region.

It is worth noting at this point that most of my examples are texts in the English language. A product of my own situatedness and limited linguistic range, this focus also takes the readership in this volume into account and acknowledges the

global circulation and prestige of English-language publications. Challenging the Eurocentrism of the fairy-tale canon is all the more a complex problem, given the hierarchical politics of language and for-profit globalizing economy of cultural production as well as the subaltern place of folk narratives to literature, but also to the fairy-tale canon itself.

On the one hand, historically, the translation of oral stories from “exotic” places and cultures into European languages meant deracinating the tales from their social functions and emic genre identifications, and often reducing radically different narrative forms – including nonfiction – to being marketed as odd but entertaining “fairy” stories. This Euro–American-centered process of decontextualizing and domesticating stories of the Other is hardly over. More specifically, the fairy tale’s cultural capital today continues to accrue interest on the appropriation of both oral and non-European storytelling traditions, as seen recently in the case of the film *Moana* (2016), where the Oceanic ancestral figure of Maui is reduced to a sidekick in a fictional story that ultimately seeks to reinforce the Disney economic empire and princess culture.

On the other hand,

fairy tales have acquired their current niche in Western and even in world culture thanks to the imprimatur of having been subsumed in collections that are not at all anonymous or collective (as would be expected with folk literature) but that are instead attached indissolubly to particular writers.

(Ziolkowski 2007: 236)

Through the lens of coloniality – the ideological motor of colonialism – the standard for humanity and progress is centered in European experiences of modernity; subjectivity is constituted by a hierarchical difference from the Other; *and* orality as storytelling is deemed inferior to writing as literature (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2007). Not only has the authored Euro–American fairy tale in print been branded as having universal appeal: most of the rest of the world is perceived as having folktales that speak to an outmoded past and can only form a constellation of wannabes around the star genre.

In contrast, postcolonial writer and scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s globalectic approach to transnational webs of stories proposes to undermine these generic and cultural hierarchies by situating both orature and literature in the “from here to there and back to here” relational dynamics of localized knowledge and story (2012). For Ngũgĩ, originally from Kenya, art forms in traditional practice are interlinked and also have a connective social function; he works to re-enact this anti-colonial esthetics in his fiction, which he used to publish in English and more recently appears in Gikũyũ first. Nishnaabeg writer and educator Leanne Simpson also proposes that her people’s storytelling – especially in an oral context and when understood from within an Indigenous framework – is “narrative imagination” that critiques colonialism but is “also a tool to vision other existences outside the current ones” (2011: 40). Standing for an embodied and emplaced approach to decoloniality, Simpson asserts that Nishnaabeg traditional narratives mobilize epistemic transformation and set a theoretical framework for political resurgence (2011: 32). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and Leanne Simpson do not discuss fairy tales at all; rather, they are taking back into their

cultural and genre systems stories that have been dismissed as “fairy tales” or false myths. While their takes on orality and storytelling are quite different from one another, their critical frameworks for interconnection and activism via storytelling in the continuum of orature-literature-cyborature provide promising decolonial moves to think *with* stories – moves that do not depend on colonial binaries and instead encourage a politics of relation.

Within fairy-tale studies we can learn from postcolonial and Indigenous decoloniality by rethinking the link between folk and fairy tale in a non-hierarchical way, focusing on their creolization (Seifert 2002; Teverson 2010), and also by reading fairy tales as wonder tales and connecting them with wonder genres in non-European cultures. As I have previously argued (2013), “provincializing” the Euro-American literary tradition of fairy tales is an important critical task that serves to undermine the appropriation and primitivizing of wonder genres from other cultures. Wonder in fairy tales invites us to be moved by what in the everyday appears extraordinary, to be curious about our place in an animated world, and to be open to transformation that does not depend on the touch of a magic wand. Reading canonized Euro-American fairy tales as wonder tales also means focusing on the “thinking” afforded by these stories – that is, reading them as emplotting a range of scenarios for how to be in the world – especially when we extend our understanding of “thinking” to include “emotion, imagination, kinesic response, and (not least) interaction with other humans and the world at large” (Cave 2016: 155).

‘Decolonizing’ the fairy-tale canon from within, then, may at one end involve, in addition to studying entertainment and ideological functions of well-known European fairy tales and their adaptations, revisiting them for their vision and potential as speculative fictions to activate personal and social transformation; and at the other end, tracing a story web of non-hierarchical transnational connections with genres in whose storyworlds everything is animate and interrelated. This requires that we emphasize how fairy tales, whatever their provenance and in different media, are distinct from indigenous literatures and other oratures, which may or may not have an equivalent fictional genre; and at the same time that we consider how traditional fairy tales inhabit an affinity with other wonder genres’ interconnectedness of human bodies, land, nature, spirit, and explore ways of being and possibilities in these tales that are not based on commodified magic within a Western economy of colonial exploitation and capitalist desire (see Bacchilega 2018; Hearne 2017; Kuwada and Yamashiro 2016; Sasser in this volume, Chapter 12; Seifert 2016).

(HOW) DO ANTHOLOGIES ‘DECOLONIZE’ THE FAIRY-TALE CANON?

As Donald Haase insightfully observes, in fairy-tale studies scholars have not focused explicitly on the canon, but have nevertheless been attending to it since the 1970s, producing editions, anthologies, and studies that “re-examine, challenge, and undermine” it (2019). Advancing the ‘decolonization’ of fairy-tale studies also depends, then, on the work of critical collections as well as anthologies, which are always in the general business of remaking a canon. With no claims to a systematic mapping, I sketch three strategies that in early-twenty-first-century critical collections and

fairy-tale anthologies show some potential to undermine the canon's Eurocentric foundation.

Re-orienting fairy-tale history

For a long time it has commonly been assumed that our classic fairy tales were representative of particular cultures ... While there is some truth to these assumptions, they conceal the cross-cultural and multilayered origins and meetings of these pan-European tales that also have fascinating connections to the Orient.

(Zipes 2001: 845)

Offering versions by Straparola, Basile, Perrault, d'Aulnoy, and other *conteuses*, and the Grimms for each well-known tale, Zipes's anthology *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* innovatively reframed the genre's history across national borders; but while this re-orientation served to suggest the significance of geopolitics, Europe remains the central site of cross-cultural connections in most anthologies (Hallett and Karasek 2008, Tatar 2017). However, in *Marvelous Transformations*, the focus of the editors Christine Jones and Jennifer Schacker (2013) on cross-cultural links between oral and written traditions has significant geopolitical implications for the genre's history. This anthology begins with "early written traditions" translated from Arabic, Latin, and Old French rather than early-modern print collections, and also foregrounds a conversation between literary fairy-tale classics and "contemporary transcriptions and translations," including Puertorican, Indian, Hungarian, French-Canadian, and Arab tales.

De-centering European traditions

African-American folklore "has been regularly anthologized, but rarely seen as culturally central to the American imagination and often repudiated because of its association with slavery," note editors Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Maria Tatar (2017: lv). Their *Annotated African American Folktales*, then, seeks to "reclaim, affirm and reanimate" these tales (2017: lxxxviii) as part of American cultural memory. To do so, they select African-American tales that draw on a range of traditions, assert the significant role of African tales within the American repertoire, and recognize African-Americans' resistance in trickster fashion to slavery, oppression, and discrimination. Identifying a range of traditions at work in African-American tales results not only in a refusal to accept their identification with Joel Chandler Harris' stereotypes in *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* (1880) or Disney's *Song of the South* (1946), but also in the recontextualizing of European fairy tales as one kind of "borrowed" and recoded narrative.

Deploying a transnational framework

While work on the *Arabian Nights* (Marzolph 2007) led the way in approaching fairy tales as transnational texts, *Grimms' Tales around the Globe: The Dynamics of Their International Reception* (Joosen and Lathey 2014) further decenters a European classic by focusing on how the Grimms' tales in translation were resisted

and repurposed in selected non-European nations – namely, Columbia, Korea, China, Japan, and India – as well as on how they have been transformed across media and genres in manga and Korean television drama. While colonial dynamics are not the main focus of these international relations, agency in the process of reception and adaptation is foregrounded. Glocalization – local adaptations of cultural products that circulate globally – is also the setting for *Revisioning Red Riding Hood Around the World* (Beckett 2013), an anthology of retellings, most of which are translated into English for the first time; however, the organization of the tales announces more of a thematic and multimedial focus than an interest in cross-cultural politics.

In contrast, for the editors of *Fairy-Tale Films Beyond Disney* (2015), the organization of the volume around “national cinemas” is designed to encourage contributors and readers to approach the plurality of these cinemas’ production, distribution, and reception dynamics in a transnational framework; this transnational framework, moreover, is consciously deployed with ‘decolonizing’ objectives (Zipes, Greenhill, and Magnus-Johnston 2015: xii–xiii). As noted later on in this essay, geopolitical awareness takes on varied inflections in the collection’s 20 chapters on fairy-tale film in selected nations across the globe. Throughout the volume, however, “the dynamics of colonial appropriation and postcolonial reflexivity are central concerns” in discussions of “locations with sizable Indigenous populations” (xvi), and in this way contributions to the volume seek to interrogate the relationship between settler colonizers, Indigenous (in many cases non-fictional) traditions, and fairy tale.

What’s needed?

While keeping European or Anglo–American traditions at the heart of the fairy-tale canon may be “a way of developing a disciplinary base” (Tatar 2017: 25), what’s needed is not so much to fray the genre at its edges, but to relocate it in a global economy of wonder genres and worldly tales. Jones and Schacker (2014) include Nalo Hopkinson’s work alongside Kelly Link and Neil Gaiman adaptations. However, there isn’t an anthology built around non-Euro–American adaptations. Neither is there in the English-language an anthology of anticolonial and decolonial tales, whether traditional ones or retellings, that would establish resistance and activism as a significant storytelling motivation.

FAIRY-TALE CANONS AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The fairy-tale canon is a site of struggle critically and pedagogically in academia. And yet thinking about fairy tales historically and within or across national, gendered, class, age, or media cultures has hardly meant doing away with the idea of a canon: given the institutionalization of fairy-tale studies, the inclusion of specific texts in the canon is contested, but the concept is here to stay. The question becomes, is there only one canon? Clearly, a list of exemplary fairy tales in the discipline of children’s literature is going to look quite different from a canonized set of fairy tales in German or gender studies. But once we move beyond scholars, teachers, and students to consider what writers, editors, publishers, film producers, imagineers, marketers, fans, reviewers, parents, and general readers identify as exemplary fairy

tales, the plurality of fairy-tale canons is indisputable and so is their competition with one another.

Bringing a discussion of communities of practice and the objects they identify as “fairy tale” to bear on a ‘decolonizing’ project demands that we in fairy-tale studies negotiate our understandings of the genre (and there are several, of course) with others who also invoke and have an investment, professional or not, in the genre. As the above list sketched, these communities of practice are quite disparate, but acknowledging them as stakeholders in the labeling and canonizing of fairy tales has the advantage of getting away from an amorphous perception of fairy-tale culture and also of sensitizing us to how we as scholars continue to pay attention to some communities, whether we find them problematic or we support their values (Bly 1990; Cashorali 1997; Estés 1992), more than to others. Considering how multiple communities of practice hold certain texts in common as exemplary means that a genre can be redefined as “the set of objects that all relevant communities of practice point to in common – that is, the boundary objects ‘we’ communities share” (Rieder 2017: 30).

This open-ended approach to the way varied social practices of genre-making depend on the needs and goals of multiple specific social groups brings attention to writers and artists who respond to and invoke the fairy tale today from colonized or anticolonial positionalities and in doing so work to reorient the genre (Bacchilega 2013: 36–8) starting from knowledges and frameworks that are socially devalued and also dismissed in the hegemony of colonial and capitalist uses of the fairy tale (Noyes 2015). These artists take on the project of ‘decolonizing’ the fairy tale in order to deploy its transformative potential from the perspective of groups that have found themselves excluded, exploited, dismissed, or exoticized in hegemonic fairy-tale storyworlds and ideologies. What matters here is that storytellers as different as Nalo Hopkinson (2001), Dan Taulapapa McMullin (2003), Diriye Osman (2013), Helen Oyeyemi (2014), Salman Rushdie, Sofia Samatar (2017), and Alexis Wright (2013) are recoding the fairy tale, marking it from indigenous, postcolonial, and often also queer sites, thereby exposing what has usually constituted the unmarked background of the genre in its Eurocentric conceptualization. These practitioners’ investment in re-inhabiting and re-orienting the genre adds impetus to the project of ‘decolonizing’ the fairy-tale canon by making scholars accountable to previously invisible communities of practice. Whether we articulate the project of ‘decolonizing’ the canon broadly or not, the intervention Euro–American feminists starting from the 1950s on made to reorient the fairy tale, and the canonizing of Angela Carter (1979) in communities of practice in and out of the academy, set a significant precedent for more recent anti-colonial repurposing of the genre and its stakes.

Studying fairy tales in film and television internationally (Greenhill and Rudy 2014; Zipes, Greenhill, and Magnus-Johnston 2015) has great potential for changing the canon in ‘decolonizing’ ways. Consider two interventions in the *Fairy-Tale Films Beyond Disney* collection that take very different approaches. One focuses on films that “may herald the birth of uniquely Australian fairy tales” and asserts that indigenous narratives in Australia should not be defined as fairy tales (Bullen and Sawers 2015: 234). The other discusses what fairy tale means in the context of African film by addressing “the interaction between indigenous African folkloric narrative and the cinematic medium” (Tiffin 2015: 222) and concludes that in African films the fairy

tale is invoked in the context of oral or mythological traditions in which the magical is often “a living rather than fictional element” (Tiffin 2015: 229). Both essays call attention to how grappling with colonial or outsiders’ perspectives matters; refuse to conflate Indigenous traditions and fairy tale; and identify located contemporary uses of the fairy tale, whether postcolonial or indigenous.

Finally, negotiating scholarly definitions in the context of an exploration of how different communities of practice recode the fairy tale to suit their purposes and goals puts another kind of pressure on the fairy tale’s relationship with other genres. As a framework for discussing First Nations’ television series that, like *Raven Tales*, adapt indigenous traditional stories, Joanna Hearne notes: “moving ... into spaces of fantasy and speculative fiction, media-makers articulate Indigenous futures through genre work that represents a new and fearless counter-appropriation of traditionally orthodox Western genres” (2017: 201–2). The fairy tale is one of these genres, but what does “orthodox” mean here? Scholars are used to placing the fairy tale within a folklore genre system, and thus differentiate it from myth or legend; and/or in relation to a literary genre system, and thus mark it as children’s stories or as a mode or structure that novels, poems, and short stories deploy. But artists across media – including non-Euro–American ones from Hopkinson, Samatar, and Danielle Wood (2006) to Yousri Nasrallah (2009), Shaun Tan (2016), and Pil-Sung Yim (Hansel and Gretel 2007) – as well as fans today mix the fairy tale with genres like the detective story, fantasy, horror, and science fiction. It thus makes sense to situate the fairy tale also within a mass cultural genre system, which differentiates the fairy tale from the other genres just mentioned according to narrative content, history, and conventions, on the one hand, but on the other, and perhaps more decisively, according to the audiences being targeted by commercial producers and distributors of narrative products. This context freights the fairy tale with another set of “orthodox” possibilities that decolonizing practices might seek to exploit while disentangling them from their varied colonial histories and globalized routes of distribution and reproduction (Rieder 2017).

Postcolonial and indigenous artists are hardly the only ones to mix the fairy tale with other genres in the mass cultural system or to do so in a range of media, extending from print literature to games and television. But postcolonial and indigenous artists do not necessarily create projects that enter the mainstream economy of popular culture or literary genres. Thus, attending to uses of the fairy tale within the framework of the mass cultural genre system is a complementary strategy to rethinking the relationship of fairy tale with other wonder genres as well as indigenous genre systems. Putting pressure on multiple genre juxtapositions and interconnections plays a significant part in the way that postcolonial and indigenous communities of practice engage with the fairy tale; for scholars to do so as well can further ‘decolonize’ its canon.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE MIDDLE EASTERN WORLD'S CONTRIBUTION TO FAIRY-TALE HISTORY



Ulrich Marzolph

INTRODUCTION

Although the modern fairy tale is most often discussed as a Western genre, historically, the genre's genesis and ensuing global dissemination probably owes more to pre-modern and early-modern Middle Eastern, and particularly Muslim, tradition than is currently acknowledged. In discussing this potential contribution, this chapter devotes special attention to two influential pre-modern collections. *The Thousand and One Nights* is a monumental collection of all kinds of narratives from Middle Eastern tradition whose international impact ranks second only to the Bible. Antoine Galland's *Les mille et une nuit* (The Thousand and One Nights) is the early eighteenth-century French translation of a fifteenth-century Arabic manuscript enlarged with material from other sources, particularly tales performed for Galland by young Christian Syrian storyteller Ḥannā Diyāb (Galland 2016). The Persian *Munes-nāme*, a title that translates as "The Book as an Intimate Friend," is a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century compilation (Meredith-Owens 1971). Translated into Ottoman Turkish and enlarged with additional tales probably as early as the last quarter of the fourteenth century, this compilation informed French author François Pétis de la Croix's early eighteenth-century adaptation *Les mille et un jours* (The Thousand and One Days) (Marzolph 2017). Both Middle Eastern collections are intimately connected to the ancient 'Oriental' art of teaching by way of stories (Marzolph 2010) and the equally influential narrative concept of "Relief after Hardship," the latter of which is particularly significant when considering the genesis of the modern fairy-tale canon (Marzolph 2017: 46).

TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITION

None of the classical languages of the Middle Eastern Muslim literatures, whether Arabic, Persian, or Turkish, have a term corresponding to the European concept of the fairy tale. The modern languages employ a variety of terms. Arabic *khurāfa* is historically connected to the fantastic adventures of the eponymous character Khurāfa who is said to have lived at the beginning of the seventh century (Drory

1994: 147–57). Persian *afsāne* is linguistically related to Persian *afsun* (spell, charm) and *fosun* (incantation), and thus to magic. Turkish *peri masalı* is a literal translation of the term “fairy tale,” the originally Indo–Persian character of the *peri* or *pari* constituting the equivalent of the European fairy in modern Persian folktales (Adhami 2010). Historically, a broad variety of fictional tales or stories were specified by generic terms such as the Arabic *ḥikāya*, *qiṣṣa*, or *mathal* (‘Abdel-Meguid 1954) or the Persian *dāstān*.

The lack of a term corresponding to the European fairy tale does not, however, imply that narratives in which magic constitutes a natural and unquestioned constituent of the human experience as in the European fairy tale were unknown. But in the pre-modern Muslim world-view tales of magic and the supernatural did not constitute a specific genre. Instead, the genre that included tales of magic is ruled by a perception of the extraordinary as aptly expressed by the Arabic terms *‘ajīb* (marvelous) and *gharīb* (strange) (Chraïbi 2016: 42–50). In other words, the genre is constituted by tales treating or discussing characters, events, or objects that surpass the ordinary everyday experience by far. Whether or not magic is involved constitutes just one of a variety of factors, others of which may include highly unusual experiences, such as a person’s extraordinary magnanimity, wisdom, trickery, or deceitfulness, or the unbelievable events of a person being subjected to the vicissitudes of fate before he or she would eventually attain happiness. Against this conceptual backdrop, magic is a possible ingredient whose potential appearance is part of a traditional world-view according to which nothing at all is impossible as God is omnipotent and may permit the occurrence of events or the existence of characters or objects the human mind cannot fathom.

A NOTE ON TRADITION

When studying the impact of Middle Eastern or ‘Oriental’ tales on Western tradition, researchers are prone to discussing exclusively or predominantly about tales in written or literary sources. These instances supply solid evidence of a given tale’s occurrence in a specific language or regional tradition, often at a specific time, thus allowing the hypothetical reconstruction of influences, dependencies, and chains of tradition. Literary collections whose tales overlap to a large degree in terms of content and sequence are more likely copied from previous models than not, and creative innovations in the later versions probably result from the conscious interference of their authors. If, on the other hand, one studies the dissemination of single tales, oral transmission and the creativity of oral storytellers need to be considered, although they can rarely be proven with certainty. Any newly discovered occurrence of a given tale in a written source might easily change the picture, and given the present degree of exploration of written sources from the pre-modern Middle Eastern Muslim literatures, new discoveries are highly probable. Even so, written sources often reveal no more than the tip of the iceberg of a given tradition area’s narrative culture. The narratives documented in written tradition are but the white crests in a turbulent sea the content of whose wave hollows, although much larger than the visible parts, can only be guessed. All the same, oral tradition should never be underestimated, both in terms of quantity or impact.

MAGIC IN THE CORE CORPUS OF *THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS*

The Muslim world's most prominent contribution to fairy-tale history is *The Thousand and One Nights*. Introduced to European and world literature by way of Antoine Galland's adapted and enlarged French translation at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the *Nights* is a work of many layers. In the work's frame tale, Shahrazād entertains the cruel Shahzamān with tales in order to save her own life and, in extension, to secure the existence of the female gender. The frame tale partly derives from Indian models, was constituted in Persian in the pre-Muslim or early Muslim period, and is first attested in tenth-century Arabic sources (Abbot 1949). Inserting the previously independent travel narrative of Sindbād the seafaring merchant's seven voyages (Bellino 2015), Galland translated the *Nights* from a fragmentary fifteenth-century Arabic manuscript at his disposal, still today the work's oldest manuscript copy known. When Galland's material was exhausted, volume 8 of his *Nights* was filled with a tale from a different Arabic manuscript (Akel 2017), and his publisher added another two tales from an Ottoman Turkish collection of tales that Galland's colleague Pétis de la Croix had translated (Karateke 2015). The final four volumes of Galland's *Nights* contain adapted and elaborated versions of tales the Syrian storyteller Ḥannā Diyāb had performed for Galland in May 1705 (Marzolph 2018), and thus material that never belonged to the *Nights* in Arabic. Galland's *Nights* was without competition for more than a century. Most of the translations published in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century follow its text. Only shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century, the first translations prepared directly from Arabic printed editions appeared, including the famous English versions done by Edward William Lane (1839) and Richard Burton (1885). The most recent English translation of the *Nights*, based on the Calcutta II edition (1839–1842), was done by Malcolm C. Lyons (with translations of two of Ḥannā Diyāb's most famous tales from Galland's French by Ursula Lyons) and published in 2008.

The degree to which the diverse layers of Galland's *Nights* relate to tales of magic varies. The core corpus of the *Nights* as represented by the fifteenth-century manuscript begins with the tale of "The Merchant and the *jinnī*" (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 419–20) in which three old men narrate their own experience in order to redeem the life of a merchant who had inadvertently killed the son of a *jinnī*. All of the three tales the old men tell deal with the magic transformation of a human being into an animal, such as a cow, a calf, a gazelle, or a dog. The transformation is always performed by a female character, and both transformation and disenchantment are achieved through a magic incantation in conjunction with the application of water. The tale of "The Merchant and the *jinnī*" is modeled on the narrative of Khurāfa that is first documented in the collection of proverbs and related tales compiled by Arabic author al-Mufaḍḍal b. Salama (d. after 903) (Drory 1994: 147–57). Khurāfa, a person who is said to have lived at the beginning of the seventh century, narrates the events as experienced by himself. The first tale is about a change of gender done twice, from man to woman and back to man, that is effected through contact with water. This change of gender also appears in the frame of a tale germane to Gaelic narrative tradition in which a man is requested to pay for a place to stay by telling a story (Hillers

1995). Since he claims not to know any story he could tell, he is sent away on an errand during which he happens to experience a series of strange adventures. A comparatively small number of versions documented from the oral performance of Scottish travelers involves a boat on which the man is magically transformed into a woman. The woman gets married, has children, and lives with her husband for many years until she is eventually transformed back into the original man. When the man returns to his house, his wife tells him that he has only been away for a few moments. In Gaelic narrative tradition, this tale finds an early antecedent in “The Story of the Abbot of Druimenaig.” Documented in a number of late medieval Irish manuscripts, in terms of linguistic criteria the tale dates to a period not later than the year 1200, and thus about three centuries later than Khurāfa’s second tale. Khurāfa’s third tale involves a complex procedure in which a female magician has a rat instantly plow, sow, harvest, and thresh barley, following which the magician prepares a magic potion from the barley with the help of which she intends to transform her disliked husband into an animal. A similar procedure is already known from a variety of Arabic texts dating from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries (Somadeva 1968: 63). In addition, it is documented in Somadeva’s Sanskrit *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Ocean of Streams of Stories), compiled around the year 1000 (55–6). It also appears in tale of “Jullanār of the Sea and Her Son, Badr Bāsim” in the fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Nights* (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 248–51) and the fourteenth-century Arabic collection *al-Ḥikāyāt al-‘ajība wa-l-akhbār al-gharība* (Tales of the Marvelous and News of the Strange) that contains various tales also incorporated into the *Nights* (Lyons 2014: 129–30).

The following tale in the *Nights*, “The Fisherman and the ‘ifrit” (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 184) introduces the motif of the demon imprisoned in the bottle, one of the internationally most influential single motifs of the *Nights*. Although in the story, the fisherman manages to trick the demon back into the bottle when he threatens to take the fisherman’s life and only releases him for good when the demon promises to reward him richly, the motif has become highly popular in political imagery, particularly cartoons, as a warning of powers that, once released, might easily get out of control. In the further course of events, there is another female magician who disenchanters her husband, whose body she had previously partially petrified, by chanting incantations while sprinkling him with water.

Most of the following tales from the fifteenth-century manuscript Galland translated get by without any explicit references to magic, although magic is again central in two of the tales embedded in “The Porter and the Three Ladies.” Of these, “The Story of the Second Dervish” (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 338–40) is particularly pertinent, as here a demon transforms a man into a monkey by sprinkling him with dust while murmuring some incantations. The young woman who recognizes the monkey’s true nature and who eventually succeeds in disenchanting him also informs the audience how she became an expert in magic.

When I was young, she replied, I had with me a cunning old woman who had a knowledge of magic, a craft she passed on to me. I remembered what she taught me and have become so skilled in magic that I know a hundred and seventy spells, the least of which could leave the stones of your city behind Mount Qaf and turn it into a deep sea, with its people as fish swimming in the middle of it.

(Lyons 2008: vol. 1, 86)

The monkey's disenchantment is achieved only after a violent fight between the woman and the demon. In the course of the fight both the woman and the demon transform themselves into a number of different animals, this being the pivotal motif of the modern tale type 325: "The Magician and his Pupil" (Blécourt 2014). As in the fairy tale, the demon's external soul is finally secured in a single seed, here a pomegranate seed, which the woman in the shape of a cockerel would have to pick up and eat in order to destroy the demon. Having succeeded in destroying the demon at the end of the long fight, the woman is burned to ashes.

Altogether, magic in tales from the core corpus of the *Nights* is practiced either by supernatural creatures or by human women. Magic procedures, particularly those of transformation, regularly involve some kind of spell and the use of water. Although some of the tales document motifs that later appear in modern fairy tales, none of the tales bears a close resemblance to modern fairy tales in terms of plot or structure. Only the motif of the demon imprisoned in the bottle has had a noticeable impact on later tradition. In addition to political imagery, one of the motif's recent uses (although mixed with the imagery of Aladdin's lamp) appears in Christina Aguilera's song "Genie in a bottle," released in 1999, in which the singer promises to "make your wish come true" if rubbed "the right way."

The extent to which tales from the Arabic *Nights* might have been known in pre-modern or early modern Europe, and thus the extent to which these tales might have influenced the genesis of European fairy tales, is still being explored. The general outlines of the frame tale of *The Thousand and One Nights* and its sibling collection *The Hundred and One Nights* (Fudge 2016) are already encountered in Italian authors Giovanni Sercambi's (1347–1424) *Novella d'Astolfo* and Ludovico Ariosto's (1474–1533) *Orlando furioso*, canto 28 (Horta 2015). In addition, numerous single motifs encountered in tales of the *Nights* are documented in works of the medieval European literatures, ranging from the Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritas* via Geoffrey Chaucer's (d. 1400) *Canterbury Tales* to Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313–1375) *Decamerone* (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 2, 510, 518, 500–2).

MAGIC IN THE NIGHTS' TALES TOLD BY ḤANNĀ DIYĀB

Much more influential than the tales of the old core corpus of the *Nights* were the tales the Syrian Christian storyteller Ḥannā Diyāb performed for Galland, some of which the French translator adapted and elaborated into the texts published in the final volumes of his *Nights* (Marzolph 2018). Right from the very start, the tales of "Aladdin and the Magic Lamp" and "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" acquired an emblematic status as the tales of the *Nights* most appealing to the Western audiences, and as representatives of the 'Oriental' art of storytelling altogether. Already shortly after their publication, the tales were published in cheap Grub Street prints available to a large audience. Together with a limited number of 'usual suspects,' such as the tales of Sindbād (originally a separate collection in Arabic), the tale of "The Fisherman and the *jinnī*" (from the Arabic *Nights*), and the "Tale of the Ebony Horse" (narrated by Ḥannā Diyāb; Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 172–4), "Aladdin" and "Ali Baba" were subsequently published in innumerable selective editions of the *Nights* targeting an audience of children and young adults (and the adults who might have read the tales aloud). In particular, the character of Aladdin

together with his lamp acquired a supreme position in world cultures (Marzolph forthcoming). It has been popularized as an emblem of magic and affluence in US consumer culture since the pre-bellum period, spawned by-products such as Sidney Sheldon's 1965–70 fantasy and comedy sitcom *I Dream of Jeannie*, and turned into an all-encompassing marketing machinery with the 1992 Disney animated movie and its musical version. Constituting an overwhelming and, in fact, inescapable, reality at the beginning of the third millennium, the Disney *Aladdin* in turn relied on earlier film adaptations of "fantasies" based on tales from the *Nights* (Cooperson 1994). Principal amongst these influences was Alexander Korda's 1940 remake of Douglas Fairbanks's 1924 *Thief of Bagdad*, which was itself indebted to Fritz Lang's 1921 silent fantasy romance film *Der müde Tod* (Destiny) and Lotte Reiniger's 1926 pioneer animated feature film, *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed* (The Adventures of Prince Achmed), a pastiche of tales from the *Nights* including Ḥannā Diyāb's tales of "The Ebony Horse," "Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Peri Banou" (Marzolph and van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 80–2), and "Aladdin." Fairbanks's debt is particularly prominent in the motif of the flying carpet that in Western tradition later developed into the quintessential expression of 'Oriental' magic. Although Muslim tradition credits King Salomon with having possessed a flying carpet, the motif's first mention in the *Nights* occurs in Ḥannā Diyāb's "Prince Ahmed." Altogether, the position of Ḥannā Diyāb's "Aladdin" as the internationally most influential Middle Eastern fairy tale is unchallenged, and the image of Aladdin's lamp with its incorporated promise of a magic solution to all kinds of everyday problems has become a prominent icon of international consumer culture.

The tales Ḥannā Diyāb performed for Galland are particularly interesting for the study of intercultural narrative communication, as some of them are fairly close to corresponding versions documented in earlier European tradition (Bottigheimer 2014). This applies particularly to Ḥannā Diyāb's versions of "The Ebony Horse," "The Envious Sisters" (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 425–6), and "Fortunatus" (Marzolph 2018). Having grown up in the transcultural atmosphere of the seventeenth-century commercial hub Aleppo (Heyberger 2015), the storyteller was subjected to a large variety of different influences, including those of Western and Middle Eastern Christian as well as Middle Eastern Muslim (and, to some extent, Jewish) Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish cultures. The extraordinary success of "Aladdin" may thus not only result from Galland's ingenious reworking of the (lost) written version Ḥannā Diyāb had supplied, but also from the fact that the storyteller relied on a common ground of shared values with the Western Christian audience that later read his tales as adapted by Galland.

THE GENERAL IMPACT OF THE NIGHTS

As for the general impact of the *Nights* on the Western literatures, it has aptly been noted that instead of discussing the influence of the *Nights*, it might be easier to discuss those authors that were not, in one way or another, influenced by the *Nights* (Irwin 1994: 290–1). As regards oral tradition, a number of tale types in comparative folk narrative research were only defined in the aftermath of the strong impact Ḥannā Diyāb's tales as popularized by Galland had on international oral tradition, such as ATU 465: "The Man Persecuted because of His Beautiful Wife," ATU 561: "Aladdin,"

and ATU 954: “The Forty Thieves” (Marzolph 2006a: 19). Galland and his version of the *Nights* stood at the beginning of a powerful development. It not only gave rise to the vogue for literary fairy tales in the Oriental mode in eighteenth-century France and Germany but also engendered a growing interest in Middle Eastern narratives as documented in the numerous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publications pertaining to the genre of ‘Oriental Miscellany’ (Marzolph 2005). Once Galland’s *Nights* was superseded by direct translations from the Arabic, versions such as Joseph Charles Victor Madrus’s (1899–1904) much expanded French translation exploited Middle Eastern narrative tradition beyond recognizable limits, incorporating the jests of Turkish trickster Hodja Nasreddin as well as Egyptian fairy tales that had recently been collected from oral tradition (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 2, 637–8). The fanciful exploitation of the *Nights* for the entertainment of the European bourgeoisie found a temporary peak in the early decades of the twentieth century when the so-called Ballets Russes performed the tales in the exotic costumes designed by Russian artist Leon Bakst (i.e. Leyb-Khaim Izrailevich [Samoylovich] Rosenberg; 1866–1924) (Marzolph and Van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 2, 487) and the Comtesse de Chabrillan in Paris organized a sumptuous costume party in 1912 under the motto “The Thousand and Second Night” (Sironval 2005: 120–1). From literature and folk narrative via the stage and the visual arts to music there is hardly an area of European and international creativity that has not been influenced by the *Nights*. In their turn, these manifestations contributed to solidifying a Western readership’s superficial notion that the *Nights* are all one needs to know of Middle Eastern narrative culture. In its post-Galland eighteenth- and nineteenth-century manuscripts, the *Nights* has turned into an *omnium gatherum* of all kinds of tales, ranging from fairy tale via legend and romance to jokes and anecdotes. Even so, it presents only a minute fraction of the richness of Middle Eastern narrative culture that remains to be explored in its thematic and motific variety as well as its potential source for European fairy tales.

THE PERSIAN *MUNES-NĀME* AND ITS INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

The Persian *Munes-nāme* was compiled at the end of the twelfth century or in the first decade of the thirteenth century by a certain Abū Bakr b. Khosrow al-Ustād (Abū Bakr, son of Khosrow the Teacher) (Meredith-Owens 1971). The book’s initial 16 (relatively short) chapters are devoted to wisdom literature of Middle Eastern and ancient Greek tradition. The seventeenth and final chapter, covering more than 80 percent of the book’s volume, is titled “On the words of great individuals, mysteries, advices, and miscellaneous maxims.” Contrary to expectations, the content of this chapter does not deal with wisdom in a straightforward manner. Instead, it contains a total of 31 lengthy narratives, the majority of which belong to the genre of “tales of the marvelous and strange,” including several tales in which magic and the supernatural play a major role (Marzolph 2017: 47–8).

Only recently (re)discovered by international research, the *Munes-nāme* is a highly influential collection of pre-modern Persian fairy tales. By way of the numerous anonymously compiled selections and adaptations of its tales, some of them enlarged with additional material, known as *Jāme ‘al-ḥekāyāt* (Collection of Stories), it had, first and foremost, a lasting impact on the tradition of the Persianate world. The

book's late fourteenth-century Ottoman Turkish adaptation titled *Ferej ba'd esh-shidde* (Relief after Hardship) influenced subsequent literary and oral tradition in Turkey and beyond. For instance, English poet Adam of Cobsam's *The Wright's Chaste Wife*, written about 1462, is so similar in content to the Ottoman Turkish (and previous Persian) tale of "The (Faithful) Wife of the Architect of Bam" as to suggest a dependance on or at least a close relation to the latter (Köhler 1867). Most importantly, the Ottoman Turkish collection lies at the roots of French author Pétis de la Croix's early eighteenth-century adaptation *The Thousand and One Days* (Pétis de la Croix 1980) published in competition with Galland's *Nights*. The version of the tale of Turandot in the *Days* is modeled upon the Ottoman Turkish (and previous Persian) tale of "Prince Khalaf, His Parents, and Their Adventures" (Pétis de la Croix 2000). Following Pétis de la Croix's publication, the tale was further popularized in drama and opera, most prominently in Giacomo Puccini's often performed opera *Turandot* (1924). In terms of European genres, the Ottoman Turkish tale is not a stereotypical representative of the fairy tale as magic is not a prominent ingredient. In terms of the genres of its areas of origin, "Turandot" certainly is a tale of the marvelous and strange. Moreover, it also contains elements of supernatural interference, as when the hero's discovery of the emperor's lost falcon indicates the end of his (and his parents') sufferings or when his accidental reading of the deathly letter entrusted to him by an anonymous messenger not only saves him from certain execution but also strengthens his confidence so that, eventually, he takes courage to confront the princess and her enigmatic questions.

Probably the character most fascinating for a Western audience in the Persian tales is the *peri* or *pari* (Adhami 2010). Although the Persian word is tantalizingly close to the English 'fairy', both words do not appear to be etymologically related. English 'fairy' derives from Latin *fatum*, 'fate', via the Old French *faerie*, 'land of fairies'. The modern Persian word, instead, derives from the Avestan *pairikā*, a term probably denoting a class of pre-Zoroastrian goddesses who were concerned with sexuality and who were closely connected with sexual festivals and ritual orgies. In Persian narratives and folklore of the Muslim period, the *peri* is usually imagined as a winged character, most often, although not exclusively, of female sex, that is capable of acts of sorcery and magic (Marzolph 2012: 21–2). For the male hero, the *peri* exercises a powerful sexual attraction, although unions between a *peri* and a human man are often ill-fated, as the human is not able to respect the laws ruling the *peri*'s world. The *peri* may at times use a feather coat to turn into a bird and is thus linked to the concept of the swan maiden that is wide-spread in Asian popular belief. If her human husband transgresses one of her taboos, such as questioning her enigmatic actions, the *peri* will undoubtedly leave him, a feature that is exemplified in the widely known European folktale tale type 400: "The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife" (Schmitt 1999).

Magic and the supernatural play a major role in several tales of the *Munes-nāme* (and its Ottoman Turkish translation). In the tale "Rīzván, the King of China, and the Dame Shahristāni" (Marzolph 2017: 55–7), the male hero falls in love with a *peri* princess who had appeared to him in the shape of an onager, and the princess shares his feelings. Although she is the rightful heiress to her father's throne, her cousin usurps the rule, and both the princess and her human mate experience a series of trials

and tribulations, including separation, shipwreck, and the help of a friendly sorcerer against a malevolent witch. In the end, the lovers are happily united and enjoy a life of bliss. In the tale “Bilqīs, Her Mother, her Birth, and Her Father” (74–5), a young man saves the king of the *peris* who had appeared to him in the shape of a white snake. The king rewards him by consenting to marry him to his sister, warning him, however, that she might at times act in ways that he will not understand. Questioning his wife’s actions later, the man loses her, as he had not respected the terms of their marriage. The couple’s daughter Bilqīs is later identified as the legendary queen of Sheba who marries Solomon.

A *pari* also plays a pivotal role in Ḥannā Diyāb’s tale “Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Peri Banou” (Marzolph and van Leeuwen 2004: vol. 1, 80–2). Rather than documenting the integration of the *peri* into the world of Arabic fairy tales, this occurrence indicates the storyteller’s acquaintance with Persian lore and his intention to locate the events in the never-never land of Persia that had since times of old been regarded as a land of sorcery and magic in which all kinds of unbelievable events might occur.

TEACHING BY WAY OF STORIES

Although a fair number of folk and fairy tales in Western tradition derive from or are closely related to tales from pre-modern Middle Eastern tradition, the Middle East’s contribution to Western fairy-tale tradition surpasses that of a supplier of motifs and themes. The truism that fairy tales are never as innocent as they might appear at first sight meets with the pedagogical concept of teaching by way of stories, as often applied in fairy tales. This concept is documented in the literatures of the Muslim world ever since their beginning. It applies to both explicit teaching in such genres as the “mirror for princes” (Lambton 1971) and implicit instruction in tales of a predominantly entertaining and, sometimes, amusing nature (Marzolph 1991). The *Nights* itself addresses the concerns of its main audience in the pre-modern Muslim context, the members of the thriving merchant class, to such an extent that it has been labeled a “mirror for merchants” (Chraïbi 2004: 6). The implicit teaching in many tales of the *Nights*, particularly those of its core corpus, is probably best summarized as one of self-awareness and audacity. In his famous essay “Narrative Men,” Tsvetan Todorov (2006) has analyzed this essential message of the *Nights*, arguing that unless characters have a tale to tell, they will die. Their self-awareness, demonstrated by their capacity to reflect their own experience in the form of a personal narrative, and their audacity, implied in the fact that they share their misfortunes with complete strangers, contribute to a positive outcome of their future. Considering the *Nights*’ function as a teaching manual, it does not come as a surprise that the Arabic author Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d. 759), famed for his translation of the Pahlavi version of the ‘mirror for princes’ *Kalila and Dimna*, has also been credited with translating the old Persian version of the *Nights*, the lost *Hazār afsān* (A Thousand Tales), into Arabic (see Chraïbi 2008: 25). The Persian *Munes-nāme* adds yet another level to the genre of instructive tales. As the author explicitly states in his preface, his collection targets a female audience (Askari 2018). If one considers the prominent female protagonists of many of the tales and reads their depiction as instructing the female audience about dos and don’ts, including a practical vision of the relative

consequences, the *Munes-nāme* turns into a veritable ‘mirror for maids.’ Early modern European fairy tales were often presented in a specific frame tale, this also being an ancient ‘Oriental’ device (Belcher 2004). Frame tales are, e.g. found in Boccaccio’s *Decamerone*, or Perrault’s *Contes de ma mère l’oye* (Mother Goose Tales). Although fairy tales in modern (oral) tradition are often detached from their previous inclusion in frame tales, it appears viable to discern traces of the ancient Middle Eastern concept of teaching by way of stories in the early modern collections of fairy tales and their content.

THE CONCEPT OF “RELIEF AFTER HARDSHIP”

An essential characteristic of fairy tales is the fact that their protagonists experience a series of trials and tribulations before attaining ultimate happiness that stereotypically consists of the threefold bliss of acquiring wealth, a beautiful wife, and political power. This feature finds its correspondence in the concept of “relief after hardship” (Arabic *al-faraj ba’d al-shidda*) that governs much of the Middle Eastern Muslim narrative literatures. As a matter of fact, there is a specific genre by that name whose best-known representative is the comprehensive collection of tales compiled by Arabic author al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī (d. 994) (Bray 2014). Although most of the tales in Tanūkhī’s book are presented as recounting actual events that occurred to protagonists identified by name, the concept itself eventually transcended the boundaries of factual narratives. When the Ottoman Turkish enlarged translation of the Persian *Munes-nāme* uses the very same title, it only vaguely alludes to the ancient genre. The title rather implies that the tales the collection contains are subject to a similar structure, as their protagonists also experience numerous hardships before attaining their goal. Although the Ottoman Turkish collection dates at most from late in the fourteenth century, many of its tales, and particularly those documented in the Persian *Munes-nāme*, are much older, thus predating by far the collections of Straparola and other European compilers that became constitutive of the genre of fairy tales. In this manner, the concept of “relief after hardship” might well have had an inspiring effect on the nascent genre of the European fairy tales that subsequently was to enjoy international success. Exactly how the concept might have been mediated to Europe still requires thorough investigation. For the dissemination of the two internationally most influential collections of Middle Eastern tales, the Persian *Sindbād-nāme* (Book of Sindbād [the Sage]), the European versions of which are collectively known under the label *The Seven Sages (of Rome)*, and the Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna*, European versions of which mostly derive from the Latin version *Directorium vitae humanae*, Jewish authors played a decisive role. In particular, Rabbi Nissim ben Jacob Ibn Shahin’s (d. 1062) highly influential Judaeo-Arabic compilation *al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda* (Ibn Shāhīn 1977) probably contributed significantly to transmitting this narrative device to Europe, though the precise nature of this mediation still remains to be explored.

CONCLUSION

Whatever the contribution of Middle Eastern Muslim narrative culture to the genesis of the modern European fairy tale might be in the end, it is important to remind

ourselves that cultural boundaries in the pre-modern world were not as impenetrable as they might appear today. Ancient Greek literature was to some extent a Middle Eastern literature, Persian literature owes much to previous Indian and ancient Greek sources, Arabic literature draws on ancient Persian, Arabic, and Jewish sources, and Ottoman Turkish literature is equally indebted to the totality of previous sources. The quest for the origins of the fairy tale in Middle Eastern Muslim literature is thus almost as fantastic as the topic it explores, and ultimately conclusive answers to our questions are elusive; equally, the answers are bound to develop, change, and become more nuanced as knowledge progresses. Although the Muslim cultures of the Middle East are today often stigmatized as the Western world's essential Other, the narrative cultures of both East and West are historical siblings.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE FORMATION OF THE LITERARY FAIRY TALE IN EARLY MODERN ITALY

1550–1636



Nancy L. Canepa

The first authored fairy tales slipped into Europe by the back door, via their inclusion in Giovan Francesco Straparola's sixteenth-century novella collection *Le piacevoli notti* (*The Pleasant Nights*, 1550 and 1553). Eighty years later, the fairy tale re-emerged more confidently in its own dedicated collection, Giambattista Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti overo Lo trattenemiento de' peccerille* (*The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*, 1634–1636), also known as the *Pentamerone*. These two experiments with the genre contain the earliest print versions of now classic tales such as “Puss in Boots,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Rapunzel,” and “Hansel and Gretel,” and were enormously influential for the subsequent development of the European fairy tale. This chapter will investigate the circumstances in which Straparola and Basile's collections were created, as well as the distinguishing features of this new genre.

Although fairy tales, as we know them today, made their European debut in early modern Italy, both authored texts and oral folk narratives had long incorporated fairy-tale material. As a number of recent studies have convincingly shown, fairy-tale motifs and episodes populated works from classical antiquity through the middle ages (see, e.g. Anderson 2000 and Ziolkowski 2009). One of the most famous forebears is the mythological tale of “Cupid and Psyche” embedded in Lucius Apuleius' second-century BCE. Latin novel *The Golden Ass*, a version of ATU 425 (The Search for the Lost Husband) and related to the later “Beauty and the Beast” variant. But it is in Giovanni Boccaccio's works that we find the first explicit post-classical reference to fairy tales, together with an early vernacular use of fairy-tale motifs. In Book 14 of his *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium* (*Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, 1350–1374), Boccaccio discusses four types of fiction in terms of their “truth value.” Although he considers fairy tales, “the invention of crazy old women,” as the lowest of these, he later recognizes their pedagogical and allegorical potential:

not even the craziest old crone keeping vigil around the hearth ... and telling some tales about the Ogre, the Fairies, and Witches, ... thinks she is not including some serious sentiment ... with which she wants to frighten small children, or delight young ladies, or make fun of older folks, or at least show the power of Fortune.

(Boccaccio 2012: 17, 21)

Various early novella collections, including Boccaccio's own *Decameron*, incorporated fairy-tale schemes and motifs. Many of the tales of the *Decameron* (1349–1351), for centuries the European model for realistic prose storytelling, feature the triumph of ordinary protagonists over hardship. Of the tales that bear structural similarities to fairy tales, "Messer Tedaldo" (2.3) features a rise from rags to riches; "Andreuccio da Perugia" (2.5) includes a tripartite series of "tests"; "Giletta of Nerbona" (2.3) the triumph of a trickster heroine; and "Griselda" (10.10) the excruciating trials of a Cinderella-like underdog married to an inhumane husband. Fairy-tale compositional techniques also informed genres positioned between the oral and literary spheres such as the *cantari*, recited epic or romantic ballads (e.g. *Liombruno*); and *sacre rappresentazioni*, or religious dramas. The *cantari* were in turn a signal influence on later authored chivalric epics such as Luigi Pulci's comic *Morgante* (1483), Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato* (*Orlando in Love*, 1495), and Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (*The Frenzy of Orlando*, 1516–32), all of which abounded in witches and wizards, fairies, and enchanted objects. Another genre related to fairy tales, the moralizing Aesopian beast fable, saw its culmination in Italy in Giacomo Morlini's Latin *Novellae* (1520). By the mid-sixteenth century, in short, folkloric and popular motifs and techniques were present in multiple storytelling contexts, including the elite conversational circles of academies and literary salons.

And yet, it is not until Straparola, and especially Basile, that the types of what would become the Western fairy-tale tradition assume their wholly recognizable form. How and why did a certain type of folk narrative make its way onto the literary stage at this time? Both authors partook in the European novella tradition initiated by Boccaccio, which produced thousands of tales in the centuries following the publication of the *Decameron* and which by the mid-sixteenth century, with the spread of print culture, could count on an eager reading public. Yet at the same time, the Boccaccian model of generally optimistic bourgeois realism, in which "even the most adventurous and dramatic human experiences culminate in ... catharsis or reconciliation," was giving way at this time to a more turbulent perspective on human agency, in which "disequilibrium, dissonance ... the blind and uncontrolled depths of instinct prevail" (Battaglia, cited in Mazzacurati 1971: 108). In this context the fairy tale propitiously appeared: not only did it appeal to publishers eager to diversify their offerings, but its consolatory narratives of magical metamorphoses provided a corrective lens to the grimmer vision of contemporary fare (such as Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (*Novellas*, 1554), as well as feeding the growing fascination with marvelous, extraordinary, and rare phenomena and subjects that permeated late Renaissance and Baroque culture and that was to some degree inspired by the intense geographical exploration of this period. But the marvelous could also reside in what was close to home, if unfamiliar. The artefacts and proto-anthropological accounts of other worlds that European explorers, colonizers, and missionaries brought back and transmitted to a curious public in some sense found a local correlative in the ethnographic re-evaluation of Europe's own "native exotic" folk traditions, and in the efforts of authors like Straparola and Basile to transpose folk narratives into the realm of literature. Ultimately, for narrators living at a time in which systems of thought, social organization, and geography were in a state of flux, the choice of a genre whose central themes revolve around journeys of initiation toward the unknown and miraculous transformations was in many ways a natural one.

We know very little about Giovan Francesco Straparola (c.1480–1558), except that he was born in the northern Italian town of Caravaggio, and as a young man moved to Venice. “Straparola” itself is a nickname meaning, appropriately for a storyteller, “garrulous”, or “bigmouth.” His present-day fame rests on the best-selling *Pleasant Nights*, published in two volumes in 1550 and 1553, with 24 more printings between 1550 and 1608. The *Nights* is truly a mixed bag; its 74 tales are “a cabinet of literary curiosities,” and include approximately 15 fairy tales, 23 direct translations from Morlini’s *Novellae*, novellas with the familiar themes of trickery or amorous intrigue, assorted moral exempla, tragic and heroic tales, and more (Beecher 2012: 3). Straparola employs a realistic frame narrative similar to that of the *Decameron*, in which, after the ex-bishop of Lodi Ottaviano Maria Sforza (a historical personage) has fled Milan for political reasons, he assembles an aristocratic company of young ladies and gentlemen at his palace on the island of Murano, near Venice, where it is decided that for the remaining nights of Carnival – 13 – the group will share tales. The fairy tales of the *Nights* are: “Cassandrino” (1.2); “Pre’ Scarpacifco” “Tebaldo and Doralice” (1.4); “King Pig” (2.1), “Crazy Peter” (3.1), “Biancabella” (3.3), “Fortunio” (3.4), “Costanza and Costanzo” (4.1), Ancilotto” (4.3), “Guerrino” (5.1), “Adamantina” (5.2), “The Three Brothers” (7.5), “Master Lattanzio” (8.4) 10.3, “Cesarino di Berni” (10.3), and “Costantino Fortunato” (11.1). Many are familiar tale types that reappear in later collections: e.g. 1.4 (Basile’s “The Bear,” Charles Perrault’s “Donkey-Skin,” the Grimms’ “All Fur”); 3.1 (Basile’s “Peruonto,” Grimms’ “Simple Hans”); 5.2 (Basile’s “The Goose,” Grimms’ “The Golden Goose”), 11.1 (Basile’s “Cagliuso,” Perrault’s “Puss in Boots”).

There are no known written sources for Straparola’s fairy tales, and notwithstanding the “centuries-long pattern of literary borrowing from story traditions of the ‘folk,’” this may be the first “hard evidence of their existence in the oral culture of the Renaissance” (Beecher 2012: 38 and 39). It is not hard to imagine that in the rich culture of Renaissance storytelling, in which “every village and town had its raconteurs ... and stories were told at all echelons of society, from hovel to court,” Straparola found an ample supply of raw material (Beecher 2012: 44). At the same time, Straparola is still firmly entrenched in the novella tradition, and in his fairy tales realistic and fantastic elements uniquely merge. In “King Pig,” for example (ATU 425A, “Animal as Bridegroom”), King Galeotto of England and his wife desperately long for a child. Three fairies satisfy their desire, but one of them wishes that he be born with the skin of a pig, which he may shed only after taking three wives. Although the king’s initial reaction is “to have the pig killed and thrown into the sea,” they ultimately decide to accept him as their son. Straparola describes the pig-boy’s “hybrid” childhood in this matter-of-fact way:

When the little piggy was more grown up, he began to speak like a human being, and to stroll around the city, and wherever there was garbage and filth, he plunged right in, as pigs do. Afterwards, he returned home filthy and stinking, and when he went up to his father and mother and rubbed against their clothes, he soiled them all over with muck. But because he was their only child, they put up with everything patiently.

(Straparola 2013: 110)

One day the rather spoiled pig announces that he would like to marry a girl he has seen around town, one of three daughters of a poor woman. He eventually marries, one by one, all three of them. The first two express their disgust at the pig's filth and secretly plot to kill him, but when the pig overhears, on their wedding nights he takes his revenge:

at the appointed hour the pig, all smeared with mud and other foul matter, arrived at the magnificent bed, lifted the feather-light sheets with his snout and hooves and soiled everything with fetid excrement, and then got into bed next to his bride. It wasn't long before she fell asleep. The pig, though, had only pretended to fall sleep, and with his sharp tusks he pierced her chest so violently that she immediately died.

(Straparola 2013: 111)

The third daughter, Meldina, proves accepting of his animal nature, and is rewarded for her love by the sight of her husband shedding his skin to become a "fair and exquisite young man." After they have a child together, his skin is definitively destroyed by the pig's father, and "Mister Pig" and Meldina ascend to the throne.

The ATU 425 tale type, especially in its early modern variations, is often read as a story about women's fears of contractual marriages to a potentially "monstrous" stranger; the perspective may be consolatory (e.g. de Beaumont's 1756 "Beauty and the Beast"), or dystopic (e.g. Catherine Bernard's 1697 "Riquet with the Tuft"). "King Pig" has been related even more specifically to an early modern anxiety about bestiality (also expressed in the numerous tracts on monstrosity and hybrid animal creatures published in this period), as well as to the particularities of the sixteenth-century Venetian marriage market, in which an excess of eligible young aristocratic men, compared to women of the same class, resulted in "a decline in patrician marriages," prolonged bachelorhoods, and a resulting greater risk of behaviors associated with "disruptive sexual desire" (Magnanini 2008: 114). Marrying down, even if potentially risky from the patrician perspective, could be one solution to this situation. Straparola's happy ending combines social mobility and social stability so as to satisfy his hybrid reading public: he "offers his readers from the artisan classes a fantasy of social and economic betterment," yet also "renders this tale palatable for aristocratic readers by offering them a fantasy of an interclass marriage that serves to preserve both the nobility and the state" (Magnanini 2008: 116).

If Straparola, in his role as "anthologizer of popular materials," is perhaps Europe's "founder of literary ethnography" (Beecher 2012: 8, 7), his tales are no match for the spectacularly original narratives of *The Tale of Tales*. Differently from the *Nights*, Basile's compilation of 49 fairy tales and a fiftieth frame is a self-contained fairy-tale universe, offering a much richer storehouse of fairy-tale motifs, themes, and tale types. *The Tale of Tales* is distinctive on many fronts. It was written in the non-standard Neapolitan dialect, a choice that underscores the collection's roots in popular culture. At the same time, Basile transformed his "raw" materials into tales distinguished by comic verve; the rhetorical pyrotechnics so beloved by the Baroque aesthetic, especially in the form of flamboyant metaphor and hyperbolic descriptions; and a parodic intertextuality that targets courtly culture and the canonical literary tradition. His

tales, though relatively simple in structure, embrace a moral complexity not always associated with fairy tales. Finally, the encyclopedic references to the sites, customs, everyday rituals, and popular art forms of Basile's time make his collection a veritable treasure-trove of anthropological information on seventeenth-century Naples and southern Italy.

Basile (c.1575–1632) was born to a middle-class family of musicians and courtiers outside of Naples, at the time a thriving metropolis and cultural center. He, as many men of letters of his time, spent much of his life as an itinerant courtier and pen-for-hire, at courts in Naples, northern Italy, Venice, and Crete, and later held administrative posts near Naples, ending his life with the title of count. His literary output, praised during his lifetime but little remembered since, included poetry, pastoral, and musical dramas, and, as a scholar, philological and editorial projects, all penned in standard literary Italian in the prevailing style of the time. But Basile also had a radically different set of projects, published posthumously and written in Neapolitan dialect: *Le muse napoletane* (*The Neapolitan Muses*, 1635), a series of nine poems devoted to the music, taverns, marriage practices, and social types of Naples; and his masterpiece, *The Tale of Tales*. In both, Basile proved to be a sharp-eyed and inquisitive recorder of the popular culture and narratives that he observed in his city and in the rural areas of southern Italy where he spent time (in one of his letters he facetiously complains that he's stuck in the wilds of Calabria where the only pastime is "filling up scraps of paper with nursery rhymes"), and in Venice and Crete, both crossroads of international culture and hubs of commercial and narrative exchange. It is presumed that in the decades preceding Basile's death these works circulated orally and/or in manuscript form in the academies and courts around Naples that he frequented, and were read or performed as entertainment or as tale-telling games.

Basile's frame narrative is a fairy tale itself (the fiftieth, or the "tale of tales") whose critical end-point generates the 49 tales that follow. It begins with a common fairy-tale motif – a princess who would not laugh – and unfolds in this way: the king of Valle Pelosa (Hairy Valley), despairing of his daughter Zoza's melancholy, unsuccessfully enlists every sort of street performer to make her laugh. Finally, he orders that a fountain of oil be erected in front of the royal palace, in the hope that the slippery antics it causes will make Zoza laugh. An old woman stops at the fountain to collect some oil, but a court page hurls a rock at her and breaks her jar. After a salty exchange of insults, the old woman, exasperated, lifts her skirts and exposes to her courtly audience the "woodsy scene" beneath. Zoza laughs, but the woman, insulted, lays a curse on her: unless she wakes her predestined husband, prince Tadeo, from his enchanted sleep by filling two pitchers with her tears, she will lose him. Zoza departs on her quest, and after many adventures she finds Tadeo and begins her job; just as she is about to shed the last tears she falls asleep and her place is taken by a slave, Lucia. Tadeo awakes, sees Lucia, and believes she is his savior; they marry and Lucia becomes pregnant. Determined to win back her usurped husband, Zoza moves into a palace facing Tadeo's and uses three magic objects given to her by fairies to attract Lucia's and Tadeo's attention. The last of these casts a spell on Lucia that makes her crave tales, and Tadeo, fearful of what might otherwise happen to the unborn baby, summons ten of the kingdom's "most expert and quick-tongued" women to satisfy her desire (Basile 2016: xx). These happen to be grotesque crones, an explicit

parody of the elegant and aristocratic tale-tellers who populate Boccaccian frame tales (such as Straparola's), but also an evocation of the "old wives" archetype of oral tradition: "lame Zeza, twisted Ceca, goitered Meneca, big-nosed Tolla, hunchbacked Popa, drooling Antonella, snout-faced Ciulla, cross-eyed Paola, mangy Ciommetella, and shitty Iacova" (10). This motley company, along with Tadeo, Lucia, and Zoza, assembles around a fountain in the palace garden, where each day they eat, sing, dance, play games, but above all tell tales – one per each of the tale-tellers. On the fifth and last day princess Zoza is asked to substitute for an ill teller, and she concludes the frame by telling her own story and revealing Lucia's deceit. Still pregnant, the slave is buried alive from the head down, Zoza takes her rightful place as Tadeo's wife, and *The Tale of Tales* ends.

Despite its subtitle of "Entertainment for Little Ones," Basile's collection was not written for children, who did not become the target audience for fairy tales until much later. The pervasive wordplay, urbane manipulation of Baroque conceit, and racy content that led Italo Calvino to call Basile "a deformed Neapolitan Shakespeare ... in whose work the sublime blends with the coarse and the sordid" clearly begs a sophisticated audience (Calvino 1956: xiii). In this example from "The Cinderella Cat" (1.6), Cinderella's shoe (here a sort of cork platform overshoe called a *chianiello* or 'patten'), a mere plot device in more canonical versions of the tale, acquires a veriginous metaphorical life of its own:

The king took the patten in his hand and said, "If the foundations are so beautiful, what must the house be like? O lovely candlestick that held the candle that consumes me! O tripod of the charming cauldron in which my life is boiling! O beautiful corks, attached to the fishing line of Love used to catch this soul! There: let me hug and squeeze you; if I cannot get to the plant, I'll adore its roots, and if I cannot have the capitals, I'll kiss its base! You were once the memorial stone for a white foot, and now you're a snare for this black heart."

(Basile 2016: 61)

Content as well as style provides surprises for the first-time reader of *The Tale of Tales*. Basile's heroes, heroines, and antagonists are not the "flat" characters devoid of psychological depth that have been described by Max Lüthi and other scholars, but flesh-and-blood creatures involved in the affairs of everyday life as well as in the marvelous adventures of fairy tales. They emote and are long-winded about it; they express affection and passion, and have sex and revel in it; they are cruel and vengeful, whine and complain, gossip, browbeat, and nag: in short, everything that we have always suspected is behind the refractive exteriors of the more famous Cinderellas and Sleeping Beauties. Nor do Basile's protagonists always present unflawed models of exemplary behavior as they make their way through a moral universe that often resembles the troubled world in which Basile himself lived. Together with the ogres, talking animals, and magic transformations endemic to fairy tales, Basile's tales feature the quests of well-identifiable types of the dog-eat-dog society of seventeenth-century Italy: back-stabbing courtiers, title-buying *arrivistes*, deficient royals, shady innkeepers, smooth-talking thieves, and opportunists of every stripe. The fairy tale, which in some of its more familiar forms depicts "the surmounting of obstacles, the harmonious solution of all problems ...

mastering the art of life” (Röhrich 1991: 209), finds its very foundations cracked in a striking number of Basile’s tales, in which happy endings are complicated by unresolved subplots, irregular paradigms of protagonism, and the intrusion of the uncontrollable or the arbitrary.

Returning to “The Cinderella Cat,” for example, it is immediately evident that Basile’s heroine is a far cry from the virtuous underdogs of the versions by Perrault or the Grimms. Zezolla, hardly helpless and even less virtuous, is a conniving strategist who jumpstarts her final triumph with a proactive criminal intervention – breaking her stepmother’s neck. This comes about after Zezolla complains so incessantly to her sewing teacher (and soon-to-be stepmother number two) that the latter devises the plan, which Zezolla immediately accepts with words worthy of a street denizen: “I know you love me dearly, so mum’s the word ... teach me the trade, for I’m new in town; you write and I’ll sign” (Basile 2016: 57). The plan backfires – the sewing teacher marries Zezolla’s father, but then introduces six daughters of her own whom she had kept secret – but the ever-enterprising Zezolla still manages to claw her way back up the social ladder, even if she never quite sheds her air of disrepute; in preparation for one of the royal festivities, she is “magnificently dressed, and placed in a golden coach accompanied by so many servants that she looked like a whore arrested in the public promenade and surrounded by cops” (60).

Another tale destined to become a classic, “Sun, Moon, and Talia” (ATU 410, Sleeping Beauty), offers a singular assortment of dysfunction and violence: rape, necrophilia, adultery, intended cannibalism, and death at the stake. After her fatal encounter with a distaff and the ensuing sleep, Talia is left abandoned in the royal palace. Some time later, a passing king enters the palace, becomes enflamed by Talia’s beauty, and when she fails to wake up “carrie[s] her in his arms to a bed and pick[s] the fruits of love” (423). After leaving he promptly forgets about her, while in the meantime she gives birth, still asleep, to twins, Sun and Moon. She awakens when one of the babies, looking for her nipple, suckles on her finger and dislodges the piece of flax that had enchanted her. The king reappears, and they become good friends. But the king has a wife back in his kingdom, who after hearing her husband talk constantly about Sun, Moon, and Talia, invites the children for a visit and then orders them to be cooked and served to her husband (the cook kills two goat kids instead). Next, she summons Talia, greeting her with these words: “Welcome, madam slut! So you’re that fancy piece of trash, the weed my husband takes his pleasure with, the bitch who makes my head spin like a top!” (425). The queen arranges to burn Talia at the stake, but Talia buys extra time by performing a slow striptease in front of the fire. The king shows up in the nick of time, has his wife thrown onto the fire, and reunites with his children and Talia.

A final example of Basile’s unique fairy-tale vision is “The Old Woman Who Was Skinned” (1.10), one of the most extraordinary, and darkest, tales in the collection. Two ancient sisters live, unseen, in a *basso* (a slum-like dwelling) under the King of Roccaforte’s palace. They are “the summary of all misfortunes, the register of all deformities, the ledger of all ugliness” (92), and they grumble at every sign of life from above. The king, consumed by desire for what he imagines to be the “monster of delicacy” below him, begs to meet her. When he finally manages to see the finger of one of the sisters through a keyhole, he is driven into an even greater frenzy, and demands more. The old woman agrees to a rendezvous in his bed in the dark of night,

and after gathering up all her flaccid skin in a knot behind her neck nearly manages to dupe the king. But in the heat of his caresses his fingers touch the ball of wrinkles, and when he puts a light to the old woman (in a bizarre reversal of the iconic scene from the Cupid and Psyche myth), “he discover[s] the dried tripe and deflated bladders that [she] kept in the back of her shop” (96). He has her thrown out the window, and after she gets caught in the branches of a fig tree, some melancholy fairies pass by. At the sight of her they break into laughter, and as a reward for curing their sadness transform her into a young beauty, whom the king then takes for his bride. When at their wedding banquet the rejuvenated old woman’s sister asks what she has done to transform herself, she is told, “I skinned myself, sister.” The old sister convinces a barber to flay her, and in an utterly grotesque final image, as blood sprays from her martyred body, the unlucky sister utters her last words: “She who beautiful will appear, suffering must not fear” (102).

Notwithstanding the inadequate final moral, “Envy, my son, destroys itself,” the real message of this tale has to do with the arbitrary and uncontrollable workings of fate. Though essentially identical in terms of virtue or lack of it, the two sisters’ destinies are mysteriously divided: one arbitrarily triumphs in her attempts to turn back time’s relentless advance, while the other meets self-destruction in the form of a spectacularly botched cosmetic surgery. This corrupted happy ending transforms the inexplicable triumph of the one sister’s plight into a unique and unrepeatable event, suggesting that good or bad fortune is neither entirely merited nor innocently held in a world governed by random forces. Causality is partial, initiations are never complete, and happy endings always have a back-story, this baroquely pessimistic tale seems to be telling us: for every hag-turned-beauty, there hangs a skinned cadaver in the closet.

In the murky moral world of the tales above, violence and deception may or may not prove to be winning strategies, and royals driven by unbridled desire become embroiled in cruel and petty pursuits. Other tales, though, present different paradigms. Some celebrate the inevitable force of love, youth, and sexual vitality (compare, for example “Petrosinella” [2.1] to the Grimms’ “Rapunzel”), and noble-spirited and kind heroes populate others. But so do winning protagonists who operate according to a completely different logic, or lack of logic, and seemingly possess few redeeming qualities. The down-and-out hero of the first tale of the collection (1.1, “The Tale of the Ogre”), Antuono, is described as “such a birdbrain and muttonhead that he couldn’t even throw a snowball” (13). He encounters an unconventional ogre from whom he receives magic gifts that change his fortune – although he doesn’t undergo any significant transformation himself. Likewise, Peruonto (1.3) is “the most dismal creature, the greatest yokel, and the most solemn idiot that Nature ever created” (32–33), but in the course of his adventures he makes a princess laugh with his absurd antics and eventually marries her. On the contrary, there are a surprising number of female protagonists whose intelligence substitutes for the magic that lesser heroes need. These heroines succeed in turning events to their advantage, often in spite of hostile family members and male counterparts whose social class and power exceeds their own. In “Viola” (2.3), for example, a working girl pokes fun at a king who greets her every day by chanting, “Son of the king, good day! I know more than you, hey!” (139). After she manages to playfully skirt every trap he sets for her, he cedes that she does in fact know more than he does, and asks her to marry him. Another

authoritative heroine, Sapia (5.6), is hired as a tutor for a dim-witted but proud prince who, under her guidance and fueled by an exasperated slap she gives him, becomes one of the most learned men of his kingdom. He marries Sapia so that he can avenge himself for the insult by maltreating her freely, but she one-ups him and he, too, finally recognizes the superiority of her wisdom.

Conventional antagonists and, in particular, ogres also figure in Basile's skewed fairy-tale universe. In the aforementioned "Viola," the heroine's envious sisters force her into the garden of a neighboring ogre, hoping thus to get rid of her. The literate ogre, however, accounts for Viola's surprising appearance with the theory, based on a story in Pliny's *Natural History*, that one of his farts has impregnated a tree and thus generated the girl. As her "father," he proceeds to tend to her with loving attention. In "Green Meadow" (2.2), ogres are portrayed as enlightened commentators on the sad state of civilized society. During an affectionate after-dinner conversation an ogre complains to his wife that "everything is topsy-turvy" with the world, since "buffoons are rewarded, scoundrels esteemed, lazybones honored, assassins protected, counterfeits defended, and respectable men barely appreciated" (135).

Finally, it should be stressed that the authors of these experiments with a new, non-canonical form could not and did not have the same role in the "civilizing process" as did later authors such as the Brothers Grimm, who through their tales intervened in debates on national identity and proper forms of socialization. As fashioners of a genre yet without conventions and without a clear position in the system of literary institutions, these early fabulists were able to engage more freely in what Jack Zipes has termed the "art of subversion." The "topsy-turvy" hierarchies of *The Tale of Tales* are part and parcel of Basile's idiosyncratic brand of the marvelous, but they also insinuate a vigorous dialogue with the here-and-now. In the words of the twentieth-century Neapolitan narrator, Domenico Rea, "It may look like Basile is just telling stories, but in reality he is describing the horror of our life down here. ... There is no pleasure and no brutality that is not contemplated there" (Rea 1984: 262).

In these early modern Italian fairy tales, especially those of Basile, the "ever after" inevitably leads back to the messy and incomplete business of living in *this* world. It is no surprise that the treasures of *The Tale of Tales* lay relatively hidden for several centuries after its publication, nor that more recently there has been a resurgence of interest in Basile and his sometimes grotesque and confusing fairy-tale world, on the part of both scholars and contemporary artists. The Italian film director Matteo Garrone, well known for films like *Gomorra* (2008), an adaptation of Roberto Saviano's brutal exposé of the Neapolitan mafia, and *Reality* (2012), a reflection on the contemporary obsession with celebrity culture, chose for his 2016 film *The Tale of Tales* three tales that address uncannily modern concerns: the pursuit of youth and beauty (1.10, "The Old Woman Who Was Skinned," already considered); the desperate longing for a child and the recourse to "artificial" means to have one (1.9, "The Enchanted Doe"); and the conflict between paternal projections and filial needs (1.4, "The Flea"). Just as many perceptive readers over the centuries, Garrone was struck by how "these tales describe a world which contains the opposites of life: the ordinary and the extraordinary, the magical and the mundane, the frightening and the pleasant, shreds of mythology and streams of popular wisdom" (Garrone 2014).

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CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAIRY
TALE IN FRANCE

1690–1799



Christine A. Jones

In and around Paris at the turn of the eighteenth century, intellectual gatherings known as salons were abuzz with a new type of literature that was brief, witty, and charming. These tales of struggle featured the sorts of marvelous helpers and enchanted objects – well-dressed fairies on chariots of fire, stunning ball gowns and livery, and castles bearing a resemblance to Versailles – that were fit for a prince. If tales became literary in Italy, they became *merveilleux* (marvelous) in France. Wisdom has it that in the 1690s French authors took up the literary genre, sprinkled it with courtly *civilité* and *préciosité*, and turned it into what we now know as the modern fairy tale. *Civilité*, courtly behavioral norms, and *préciosité*, the art of speaking eloquently, especially in matters of the heart, were the social code of the aristocracy and the literary mode of its writers. The sumptuous decor, imperial finery, and material innovations, such as watering cans and full-length mirrors, that appear in early fairy tales attest to the cultural milieu in which they first flourished: Louis XIV's France. It was an era fascinated by the French language, witty conversation, romance, and its own sense of style.

Oral tales had of course circulated for centuries, but French *contes de fées*, fairy tales, captured the stylish atmosphere of the court in their themes and in their diction, which at least partially explains why they flourished under these conditions. That said, when the decade's most notable fairy-tale writers – Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Charles Perrault, and Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier – and their contemporaries created the romantic world of *féerie* (enchantment) at the end of the seventeenth century, they did not know they were forging a style for the tale that would endure for centuries. Instead, writers drew from the genres they knew – epic, medieval romance, and popular narrative, especially folktales – to engage creatively with issues surrounding sociability, gender, and courtship. They wrote competitively in salons and published consistently until about 1715, such that their output caused the birth of a print genre. This formal experiment with language and literary form achieved remarkably long-lasting results.

What's more, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, the Comte de Caylus, and other literary beneficiaries of the fairy tale in the eighteenth century swiftly and greatly expanded its repertoire. Those novelties in turn affected how the 1690s tales were refashioned for later audiences, in French and in translation. As this chapter aims to

demonstrate in a series of vignettes, we can see in the French literary tale evidence of both the tale's readily adaptable form and also how well it navigates rapidly shifting political and social landscapes. Each of the sections below, signaled by the year of a notable publication, showcases an exemplary moment when the *conte de fées* and its progeny charted paths through the brambles of French sociability and politics.

1690

The language and inaugural appearance of 'fairy tales' can be traced in the last decade of the seventeenth century to the work of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy. A prolific writer and one of several *conteuses* (women writers) that took up the pen to experiment with this new form, she published the first story identified with fairies in 1690. It took the form of an embedded tale told by a character in *Histoire d'Hypolite, comte de Douglas* (*The History of Hypolitus, Earl of Douglas*). Critics refer to the practice of nesting shorter stories within a longer frame story as intercalating or interpolating. We see this technique in the long introduction of the *Thousand and One Nights*, in which we meet King Shahryar and the young Sheherazade, who tells him hundreds of tales with very little interruption, and in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* wherein characters on a journey are detained or *en route* longer than expected and pass the time by telling stories. What makes d'Aulnoy's intercalation worthy of note is the nature of the tale told. While an artist paints the portrait of the Abbess of Saint-Menoux, the title character is asked to entertain her by telling a story. He chooses one "approchant de ceux des Fées" ("not unlike those of the Fairies") (d'Aulnoy 1786: 75).

Now known as "l'Ile de la félicité" ("The Island of Felicity"), the tale features the Russian King Adolph, who ventures deep into the forest on a hunt. When a violent storm whips up, he takes refuge in a cave that turns out to be the seat of Aeolus, the God of the Winds, where Zephyr and his brothers, the directional winds, reside. Soon after Adolph's arrival, Zephyr returns from his escapades and recounts his trip to the Island of Felicity, ruled by a charming princess of that name and inaccessible to mortals. Enchanted by the idea of this place and its beautiful monarch, Adolph requests Zephyr's help to get there. Borne on the wind, he makes his way to the princess and they share an immediate mutual attraction. Their bliss turns troubled when Adolph, realizing the stay that felt like one week had lasted 300 years, insists that he has missed too much of his political life and must return to rule. Adolph dies at the hands of Time on his road home.

Because this tale set the stage for the world of enchantment that emerged from the 1690s in print, several of its features are worthy of note. First, d'Aulnoy transformed its oblique identification in *The History of Hypolitus*, "a tale not unlike those of the fairies," into the title of a published collection of her tales in 1698: *Les Contes des fées*. That first use of the expression in French was translated into English as *Tales of the Fairies* in 1709, then picked up by editors in the city of Troyes for use on inexpensive chapbook editions of Charles Perrault's Mother Goose fairy tales in the 1730s, where it would have spread widely. The shortened title "Fairy Tales" finally graced the cover of a 1794 edition of Perrault's fairy tales published in Massachusetts.

Second, the tale appeared in a sophisticated novel and was told to an abbess in that novel. French fairy tales thus began as adult entertainment. Third, it has a tragic

end. No “happily ever after” awaits Adolph once he leaves the Island of Felicity; on the contrary, he dies. Princess Felicity, for her part, learns the pain of unhappiness. Finally, although the tale may have been like those told by the fairies, no fairies inhabit its lands. Instead, gods and extraordinary mortals find each other on the Island of Felicity.

There are lessons to be learned about the richness of the tradition from this inaugural tale. Like this narrative, many of the 144 fairy tales that were published in that first period of intense publication in France, 1690–1715, have demonstrably adult themes, but some of the best known today (e.g. “Little Red Riding Hood”) appear to target a younger reader. Some end happily ever after, others do not. Although enchantment typically occurs under the rule of fairies, sometimes fate lies in the hands of ordinary humans. While settings are often fantastical, some reference geographically known locales. Fairy tales come in many shapes and sizes. Flexibility and malleability allowed writers of early French fairy tales to take up a variety of important late-century debates, including those concerning the social roles of men and women, how to repurpose ancient literature for modern life, and the social norms around marriage, particularly among the elite.

Maiden warrior tales, for example, explore the rules that govern gendered behavior. Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier’s “Marmoisan ou l’innocente tromperie” (“Marmoisan, or the Innocent Deception,” 1696) sends a young woman to war in place of her twin brother. While serious in its suggestion that a young woman nurtured in the arts of the hunt and the sword could be as fearsome in battle as a man, the tale also mocks gender politics with humor. After passing as a man through a host of situations that could have compromised her deception, Léonore’s cover as Marmoisan is almost blown because she folds laundry too well, something the other soldiers notice with great suspicion. In subject matter and tone, “Marmoisan” exploits the marvelous universe, where anything is possible, to shatter real-life gender expectations about how women should behave and contribute to the glorification of the nation.

An old and hallowed genre designed to memorialize real-world sovereigns, the panegyric may seem an odd bedfellow for the fairy tale. Nevertheless, Jean de Préchac put the tale in the service of unconventional panegyric to make a commentary on Louis XIV. Préchac’s “San Parangon” (“Nonpareil”) of 1698 features a prince whose talents are peerless and who falls in love with a much older, but youthfully beautiful princess from China. Insofar as he endeavors in all he does to impress her, she inspires all the action in the story, from his creation of a porcelain city in her honor to his military campaigns. By appealing to concrete details about his youth, buildings at Versailles (such as the Trianon porcelain palace) and key battles of his reign, the tale recounts the life of Louis XIV under the guise of the character Nonpareil. In the fashion of a tabloid that adds juicy detail to a star’s life, Préchac has the reigning monarch of France marry an eternal Chinese princess. She may represent the older empires to which Louis XIV looked for inspiration or the special passion for Asian wares, particularly lacquer and porcelain, at his court. Either way, the tale praises the king’s exploits, all the while attributing them to a foreign culture through a female allegory of inspiration.

In our final example of early fairy-tale themes, Louise de Bossigny d’Auneuil’s *La Tiranie des fées détruite* (*The Tyranny of the Fairies Destroyed*, 1702), tackles the rules of courtship and marriage. A host of characters and plots from the preceding

decade appear in this mash-up of *féerie*. Published in the twilight of the first vogue, it has the distinction, along with titles like “Le Palais de vengeance” (“The Palace of Vengeance”) and “Heureuse peine” (“Lucky Punishment”) – both by Henriette-Julie de Murat – of challenging what had already become commonplaces of fairyland. At 90 pages in its original folio (small form) edition, its plot reads like an epic adventure. It features a post-apocalyptic marvelous landscape in which nefarious enchanters control the world and the King of the Monsters works with wicked fairies to capture young women he wants to marry. For their part, the fairies delight in turning people into animals or stone when they feel annoyed.

Enter the ingénue protagonists Philonice and Anaxandre, who are madly in love. Every time they appear to reach the moment of bliss, the King of the Monsters or a nasty fairy by the name of Spite or Cruella or Envy throws an obstacle in the way of their happiness. The tale ends with the prophesized arrival in fairyland of an unnamed Sovereign Princess, who undoes the curses on dozens of hapless humans and unites three couples, including Philonice and Anaxandre in matrimony. Such legendary princesses as Biche blanche (White Doe) and Chatte blanche (White Cat), found in the tales of Madame d’Aulnoy, are invited to the wedding. The Sovereign Princess rewards good fairies, notably Serpent, who has helped the lovers, and condemns the cruel fairies, the Monster King, and his Furies to manually work a water wheel on the river for the rest of their days. As a spoof on the tradition, *Tiranie* makes sure that the troublesome personalities of fairyland never meddle in human affairs again by putting a mortal and female sovereign in charge of the Temple of the Fairies. If more allegorical than political, this commentary can nonetheless be read in social terms. When women are in charge, marriage is an affair of the heart, not of politics, and men do not get their way simply because they have power.

In spite of the destruction in *Tiranie*, this genre designed to engage debates in the court culture of Louis XIV, outlasted its monarch. Several of the stories penned in this period – among them Charles Perrault’s “Le Petit Chaperon rouge” (“Little Red Riding Hood”), “La Belle au bois dormant” (“Sleeping Beauty”), “Cendrillon” (“Cinderella”), Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy’s “La Chatte blanche” (“The White Cat”), and “Le Nain jaune” (“The Yellow Dwarf”) – were translated, zig-zagged through oral and print culture, and came down in multiple forms to North America as some of the most popular fairy tales in history. But many less popular tales, such as those highlighted above, gave the genre rich diversity in the seventeenth century. Writers in the next century grew up reading fairy tales and learned from the first vogue just how much the genre could do. They exploited the taste for the marvelous in France to take up contemporary fads and anxieties.

1704

Over the first decade of the eighteenth century, France had a healthy fascination with the Orient, that is, the nations to the East of Europe and stretching from the present-day Middle East through India to China. From lacquer and porcelain to coffee and tea, late-seventeenth-century Europe delighted in the material culture of the Eastern part of the world, known then as *les Indes* (the Indies). Antoine Galland added considerably to that fascination when he introduced Europe to a new collection of tales known in Arabic as *Alf layla wa-layla* and in English as *The Thousand and One*

Nights. It took Galland from 1704–1717 to produce all twelve volumes of *Les Mille et une nuits*, the inaugural Western translation of the collection. It appeared immediately in English based on Galland’s translation, making Galland’s the only version of the *Nights* known to Europeans throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth. The voice of the young and brave Scheherazade, frames the volume. She tells King Shahryar hundreds of stories to distract him from a fit of rage against his wife’s infidelity that drives him to sleep with and kill virgins each night.

Although Galland’s translation is based on a fifteenth-century Arabic manuscript of *Alf layla wa-layla*, he added tales culled from other sources to his own edition. Among them, “Histoire d’Aladdin, ou la lampe merveilleuse” (“The Story of Aladdin’s Wonderful Lamp”) and “Histoire d’Ali Baba et les quarante voleurs” (“The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”) aligned particularly well with the thwarted-romance plots of the French fairy tale. In hindsight, these proved to be shrewd additions as they became hallmark stories in the West and helped catapult the collection to fame in French and English. Edme-François Mallet’s article on fairies for the *Encyclopédie* highlights one way the European reader could connect with the language and characters of the *Nights*:

[Fairies] come from the Orient and it seems the Persians or Arabs invented them, since their history and religion is full of stories of fairies and dragons. The Persians call them *peri* and the Arabs call them *jinn* because there is a special province they believe is inhabited by fairies. The Arabs call it Jinnistan and we call it the land of the fairies.

(Mallet 1751: 464; translation mine)

Galland’s tales fulfilled French readers’ expectations in their use of wonder and fairies.

As much as the fairy tales of the 1690s may have provided fertile ground for the reception of the *Nights*, Arabian tales in turn engendered a taste for the exotic that bled back into French fairy tales. Cultural details – a name, an object – occasionally crept into European fairyland resulting in an “Orientalized” landscape. To take one example, the bearded protagonist of Charles Perrault’s 1697 tale “Barbe bleue” (“Blue Beard”) wields a knife called a *grand coutelas* or large cutlass, as it was first translated by Robert Samber in 1729. Short and wide, the cutlass was standard issue navy weaponry in France at the turn of the eighteenth century and established the protagonist as a former sailor. That detail is important in the story, as Blue Beard is ultimately vanquished by two much younger cavalry soldiers, a dragoon and a musketeer, who arrive to save their sister. Dragoons and musketeers conventionally carried guns (arquebuses and muskets, respectively), but Perrault has them fight Blue Beard with swords. Swords are longer even than a big cutlass – with all the irony that implies in this fight between men – and the brothers prevail.

Editor Benjamin Collins issued a new version of the tale in English in 1763 with a significant alteration: Blue Beard now holds a scimitar, a long Middle Eastern saber with a curved blade, instead of a short European cutlass. It is a more formidable and exotic weapon than the one that Perrault and Samber put into Blue Beard’s hand. The scimitar transformed the ending conflict in the tale from a skirmish between the navy and the army, perhaps England and France, wherein the land weapons outperform the sea-faring arms, to an East–West encounter in which the West triumphs. A long

tradition ensued of identifying Blue Beard with the Eastern saber, which included naming his wife Fatima, and sometimes setting the tale in the Middle East.

Through the characters and adventures introduced by *Les Mille et une nuits* into early eighteenth-century Europe, fairy tales became a site of cultural contact for French readers. And as the above example suggests, publishers also created conditions for reading the *Nights* and the French fairy tale through each other's tropes. Indeed, Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's tales were translated into English as early as 1709, at the time of the *Nights*' first English translation (1706). Charles Perrault's tales, which would ultimately become much more famous than d'Aulnoy's, entered the British market in English with Samber's landmark 1729 translation of his collection. By circulating through French, Dutch, and British book markets catering to burgeoning literacy and Francophilia, tales by d'Aulnoy and Perrault that were written in the 1690s for an elite adult audience became part of the repertoire of European popular literature for old and young audiences. Fervor for *féerie* cut across national frontiers and social milieus by the mid-century.

1741

After the *Nights* and d'Aulnoy's tales, the translation of Perrault's Mother Goose tales into English marked a watershed for new writing that expanded the fairy tale's purview and its public appreciation in France and in England. By 1740 a first generation of writers in both countries had grown up reading French *contes de fées*. On the horizon were the first Dutch translation of Perrault's Mother Goose tales, the first version of "La Belle et la Bête" ("Beauty and the Beast") by Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve and the well-known version of that tale by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (discussed below). Of the mid-century men and women of letters who wrote *conte de fées*, Anne Claude Philippe de Tubière de Grimoard de Pestels de Lévis, comte de Caylus, marquis d'Esternay, baron de Bransac constitutes an early and singular example. As his many titles suggest, he lived an aristocratic life – which included study and travel – painted with good success, penned dozens of learned treatises, especially on ruins he saw traversing Southern Europe, and wrote tales as a hobby. Both in rank and in preoccupation, he was a throw-back in an age when fairy tales were edited, translated, and sold for a wide, generally non-aristocratic reading public. Caylus attended a fashionable salon that excelled in radical forms. He culled material for his own tales from the literary fairy tale and repurposed it, often parodically, for a new adult readership. Taken together, his tales are a study in genre appreciation. In fact, he dabbled in every form of the tale that he inherited from the turn of the eighteenth century. Over the 1740s, he would traverse the genre with *Féeries nouvelles* (*New Enchantments*, 1741), *Contes orientaux* (*Oriental Tales*, 1743), and the classically-inspired *Cinq contes de fées* (*Five Fairy Tales*, 1745).

"Sylvain and Jocosa" from *Féeries nouvelles* illustrates the blend of traditionalism and iconoclasm that characterizes Caylus' tales. The eponymous hero and heroine are both shepherds, an element that speaks to Caylus' appreciation for the pastoral as it appears in parables and tales. Embroiled in a feud worthy of the Montagues and the Capulets, their families forbid them to speak to each other. Time in the pastures provides a welcome reprieve from their families and an idyllic setting in which to fall in love. A benevolent fairy looks after them and their forbidden love

on the promise that they will always stop to clear her fountain of pebbles and twigs before dawn. They comply until one morning when, lost in thoughts of the other, each one stops to collect wildflowers with which to make the other a gift (shades of “Little Red Riding Hood”), which causes them to arrive late to the fountain. As she warned them she would, the fairy punishes them for disobeying. In the fashion of the century of Enlightenment, the form their penance takes is both physical and intellectual. First, they are forced apart when the fountain rushes forth like a river, causing them to wander three years on either side never able to bridge it. Then, when the fairy, with a stroke of her wand, brings them back together, she tells them an Oriental tale set in Bagdad and illustrating – perhaps with tongue in cheek in the hands of a count/marquis/baron – the lesson that the virtues of a simple life are superior to great wealth.

1757

By far the most famous story to emerge from the generation that had grown up on fairy tales is “Beauty and the Beast.” The first version of that tale, published in 1740 by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, was a novel-length narrative that included a frame story and the stories of Belle and the Beast, his transformation, and her family. A decade later, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont shortened the tale to be intercalated into a frame story in a publication she called *Le Magasin des enfants* (1757), which she also translated herself into the English *Young Misses Magazine* (1758). Not only did the shorter, wittier tale now conform better to the fairy-tale genre, but de Beaumont also exploited the literary conversation happening between France and Britain, finding readers in both languages.

Tailored to pedagogy and aimed at young women of the Enlightenment, *Le Magasin des enfants* fictionalizes the experience of a governess with young charges, to whom she tells tales. Mrs Affable (Mademoiselle Bonne) tells several ladies of quality stories she calls tales (*contes*), which she explains are not like history. They are fictions written to entertain (*amuser*) the reader/listener, which she tells to take the edge off the ladies’ lessons. If their book-learning imparts inherited wisdom, Mrs Affable’s stories amuse them by spinning fantastical scenarios that nonetheless impart social lessons in discernment and judgment. As even the names of the narrators in the different languages demonstrate – Miss Goody, a spinster, in the French vs. Mrs Affable, a married woman, in the English – each version was also designed to make sense culturally to its audience. “Beauty and the Beast,” for example, opens avenues for a young learned woman to break out of her struggling family with its bourgeois values and into a world in which book learning and proximity to nature give her insight.

“Beauty and the Beast” draws from the well of new ideas and social transformations afoot in the Enlightenment. Beauty’s father believes in the education of his daughters. Not simply book smart, Beauty relishes physical work when the family loses its fortune and relocates to the countryside. Her perception of the goodness in the Beast can partially be understood through her fascination with, and reverence for, nature, as evinced by her desire for a rose when her sisters want fashion accessories as mementos of their father’s travels. A penchant for naturalism and the understanding that it may well be nature, not culture that is more “civilized” make her a properly

philosophical scientist of her century, even a budding student of Rousseau's *le bon sauvage* (noble savage).

1781

French tales had earned their initial renown through a positive reception among the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French elite. We have seen that their enduring celebrity over the eighteenth century also owes a debt to the British and Dutch publishers who generated wider and all-age audiences for their tales, especially in English. As fairy tales reached a wider swath of society in France and Britain through less expensive chapbook editions, in part a sign of the great strides in making paper more cheaply, they nonetheless retained their power and prestige in France as a heritage worthy of royal consumption. A landmark edition of Charles Perrault's tales published by Pierre-Michel Lamy in 1781 had an illustrious dedicatee and recipient. Lamy dedicated *Contes des fées, par Charles Perrault de l'Académie Française* to his Most Serene Highness Monseigneur le Duc de Montpensier, who was Louis Philippe Joseph d'Orléans, King Louis XVI's cousin. In the dedication, Lamy invites the duke to, "Allow yourself a smile, Monsieur, for the measures truth took years ago to instruct and please" (Lamy 1781: n.p.). An irony of this dedication is that just a few years later, his Serene Highness supported the French Revolution, changing his family name to Equality. Unfortunately, that change of heart did not save Citizen Equality from being executed during the Reign of Terror.

According to the publisher's note on the back of the title page, Lamy printed a copy of this edition on costly vellum to present it to *Madame Royale*, Marie Thérèse Charlotte, the oldest child of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and first princess of France. Vellum paper – high quality parchment – was an extravagance, as paper-making had undergone extraordinary innovation in the eighteenth century and such expensive material would have been reserved for fine bindings. This edition included both the well-known Mother Goose tales by Perrault and lesser-known verse tales he had published earlier in 1694, one of which is an early print version of "Peau d'âne" ("Donkeyskin"). As the sub-title of Lamy's volume suggests, the book stands as an homage to the first fairy-tale author who could also claim membership in the illustrious *Académie Française*, the highest arbiter of literature and language in the land: Charles Perrault. The Lamy volume leans on that renown. In hindsight, this vellum copy of classic tales can appear to be a last gasp of sumptuous luxury, particularly as it served as an homage to a duke and a princess who became the final generation of reigning royals of France.

1785

Towards the end of a century teeming with literary innovation, Charles-Joseph, Chevalier de Mayer undertook the collection of France's fairy-tale heritage in an encyclopedic edition. From 1785 to 1788, Mayer published the 41-volume *Le Cabinet des fées, ou Collection choisie des contes des fées, et autres contes merveilleux* (*The Fairies' Cabinet, or Select Collection of Fairy Tales and Other Marvelous Tales*). A distinguishing feature of this collection, which makes it different from the many multivolume collections compiled by folklorists of the nineteenth century, is that

Mayer used only print editions as his sources. That is to say, this is a collection of the publishing history of the tale in the eighteenth century. Though it was the largest collection of print tales to date, he was not the first to collect stories published in French; Enlightenment thinkers obsessively gathered knowledge, as the above-cited *Encyclopédie* project overseen by Denis Diderot (1751–1772) attests.

Neither was Mayer the first to choose the enigmatic title, *Cabinet des fées*. France had been memorializing its tales by fairies for most of the century. The core of Mayer's title, *Le Cabinet des fées*, comes from a 1717 collection published by Estienne Roger, a well-known publisher of fairy tales in Amsterdam. Roger's *Le Cabinet des fées contenant tous leurs ouvrages en huit volumes* (*The Fairies' Cabinet, Containing All of Their Work in Eight Volumes*) features the major writers of the 1690s: Charles Perrault, Marie-Catherine le Jumel de Barneville d'Aulnoy, Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon, Henriette-Julie de Castelnau de Murat, Charlotte-Rose de La Force, Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, Jean de Mailly, and Louise de Bossigny d'Aunueil. D'Aunueil purportedly called her literary salon, "le cabinet des fées," for which Roger's volume may thus have been named. Volume 8 indeed ends with d'Aunueil's *Tiranie*, as though prophesizing the shape-shifting the genre would undergo after 1715.

In 1717, Roger's title, in turn, evoked the curiosity cabinet of the early-modern world, which housed – not unlike a private museum – an aristocrat's precious and rare objects, collected on travels or visits to major markets of exotica. Among the wealthiest royals, cabinets could in fact be entire rooms of exotic collectibles, from porcelain and gemstones to tusks and blow fish. These public spaces in manors and châteaux displayed wealth, a healthy sense of curiosity (prized in men), and worldliness. The choice to reproduce the 1717 title and extend it to include "other marvelous tales," which refers to the other forms of the tale that were published over the century, links Mayer's collection firmly to the writers of the first vogue, 1690–1715, when fairies were alive and well and *Les Mille et une nuits* had only just made its mark. In that sense, Mayer preserved these tales as collectibles from the past.

Mayer's argument about why he put the collection together, namely, to save tales that were in danger of no longer being read suggests that the fairy tales of the 1690s fared poorly in the eighteenth century, that both the fairy tale and the Oriental tale lost ground in the century of Enlightenment. The print and translation history that gave international recognition to Perrault's and the *Nights'* main characters, epitomized by the political cartoon below (Figure 5.1), suggest instead that while their tales found publishers and readers right through to the nineteenth century, that was not the case for many of the dozen other writers, predominantly women, who forged the *conte de fées*. Mayer's volume thus stands as a monument to France's first century of literary fairy tales, those that had met with success and those that needed another chance of finding it among readers of a new age.

1799

Although the Revolution that commenced in 1789 halted the consistent publishing of French tales in France, the map of francophone fairy-tale publication and translation was already much wider than the Hexagon (continental France) by that time. The above-cited 1763 translation of Charles Perrault's Mother Goose tales by Benjamin

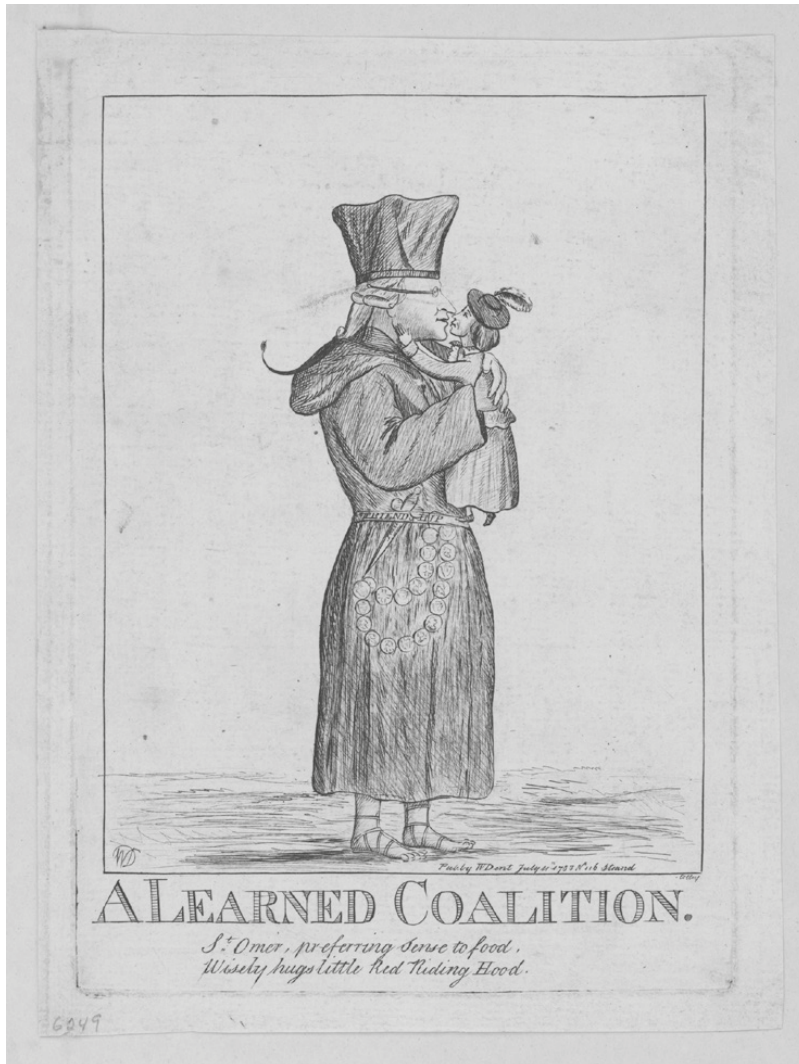


Figure 5.1 William Dent, *A Learned Coalition* (1783).

Collins, for example, was reprinted at regular intervals in 1777, 1780, 1783, 1791, and 1799. While France waged a bloody battle to change the form of its government, London and Amsterdam kept the presses running and the taste for French stories alive, providing fertile ground for fairy tales to make a speedy comeback in Paris.

A precious extant edition from the early years of France's democracy attests to the political recovery of stories that the new citizens of France embraced, even as they rejected the Old Regime that had witnessed their birth. *Les Contes des fées. Par Charles Perrault de l'Académie Française* (*The Tales of the Fairies, by Charles Perrault of the Académie Française*, 1799) was published in the eighth year of the First Republic (founded 1792), when the government had temporarily stabilized in the wake of the Terror (1792–1794) and before Napoleon Bonaparte rose to turn

the fledgling democracy into an empire (1804). This edition was reprinted in year nine (1800), and again in 1815, the year that Napoleon III established the Second Empire following the brief restoration of the Bourbon monarchy under Louis XVIII (1814–1815).

The dogged publication of this edition in the midst of extraordinary political turmoil demonstrates that fairy tales of the 1690s were carried safely by editors, publisher, and readers through the rapids and cascades of France's ideological landscape across the centuries. The style and length of the stories changed often with new editions (Figure 5.2, *Cinderella in an Empire waist*) but that malleability also created

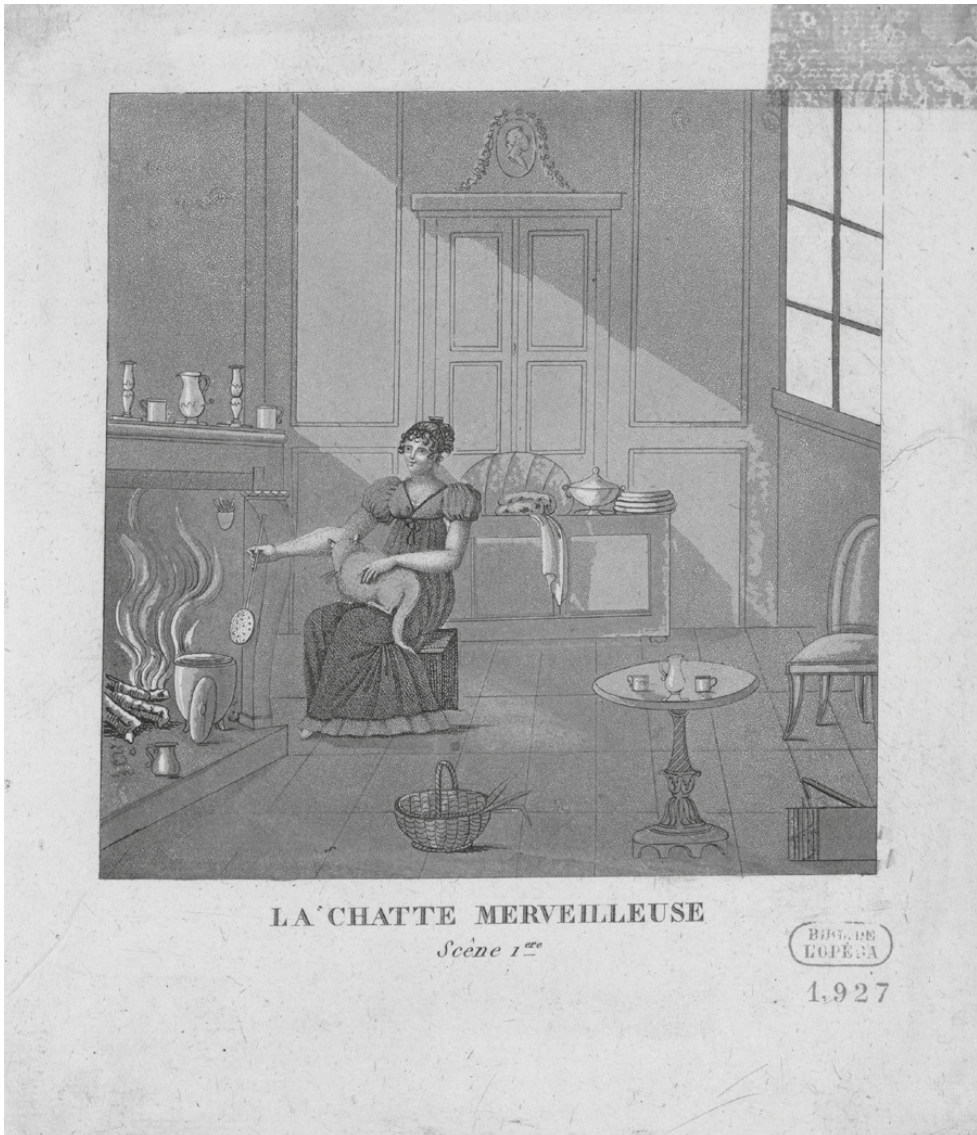


Figure 5.2 Frontispiece, *La Petite Cendrillon, ou la chatte merveilleuse* (1810).

an international culture of appreciation for French stories that gave revolutionaries a reason to hail fairy tales as the pride not of the Old Regime, but of the nation. Along with their progeny in the eighteenth century, they were anthologized, plucked out of literature and into politics (Figure 5.1), and displayed on stage as vaudeville (Figure 5.2). In the nineteenth century, the most famous tales by Charles Perrault and Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy became the source matter for generations of publishers and writers, not the least of which were Benjamin Tabart, the first London bookseller of editions for young readers, and the celebrated adaptors of German folktales, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm.

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CHAPTER SIX

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL/ TRANSNATIONAL

The Brothers Grimm and their fairy tales



Maria Tatar

Nationalism seems in many ways too weighty and portentous a concept to bring into the orbit of the fairy-tale universe. After all, folktales in general have often been seen as what Wole Soyinka calls “mythology’s poor cousin,” and they encapsulate little more than folk wisdom, operating as “moral monitors” and charged with “social regulation” (Soyinka 2015: n.p.). They do not, Soyinka adds, possess the transcendent possibilities opened by myths – origin stories and charter narratives that become “embedded in a community’s apprehension of itself as a distinct entity.” And yet some anthropologists have argued that fairy tales are not so much subordinated to myth as a constituent element of the mythical world. Claude Lévi-Strauss tells us that “every version belongs to the myth,” suggesting that the French “Beauty and the Beast,” the Japanese “Monkey Bridegroom,” and the Greek stories about Zeus and Europa are all part of a larger myth about mortals, animals, and gods (1955: 436). In the rush to make distinctions among myth, legend, saga, fairy tale, folktale, and other collective forms of expressive culture, it is easy to ignore the fact that, while serving different ritual functions, they all draw their flavor and zest from what J.R.R. Tolkien called the “Cauldron of Story” (1964: 29), a brew that is constantly simmering as we partake of it.

“Since the end of the nineteenth century,” Eric Hobsbawm told us some years ago, “the inhabitants of states have been identified with an ‘imagined community’ bonded together, as it were, laterally by such things as language, culture, ethnicity, and the like” (1996: 86). Quoting Benedict Anderson’s notion of imagined communities (Anderson was his student), Hobsbawm recognized the importance of language and culture or “invented traditions” in building national identity (1996: 86), just as Anderson found that the application of print technologies in a capitalist marketplace led to the creation of a nation constructed by social bonding through culture. The rise of national consciousness can be traced in part to a turn from official languages foreign to a majority of a region’s inhabitants (Latin, for example) to the adoption of a standardized dominant vernacular. In Finland, Anderson tells us, nationalism and the implementation of Finnish as the official language emerged concomitantly with the “study of folklore and the rediscovery and piecing together of popular epic poetry,” along with “the publication of grammars and dictionaries” (2016: 77). And so we see that nationalism is not so far removed from the domain of fairy tales after all.

If the Finnish case sounds strangely familiar, it is in a large part because the collective mission described by Benedict Anderson was carried out almost singlehandedly in German-speaking lands by two brothers deeply immersed in the study of Germanic culture. To be sure, the move from German particularism to national unity was not at all smoothly linear and it took *Realpolitik* at the highest level to achieve, but the Brothers Grimm, living in a time of political turmoil and social unrest, were deeply committed to consolidating national identity through culture, and their published works were single-mindedly devoted to preserving a cultural heritage that could be passed on by successive generations. Their *Deutsche Sagen*, *Deutsche Mythen*, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, *Altdeutsche Wälder*, and so on, all emphasized that culture was nationally inflected in every way and that it was the binding agent for the many regions that identified as Germanic.

The one work by the Grimms that had the most lasting influence did not have “German” in its title. The *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, instead, emphasized that the tales in that volume were oriented toward an audience of children, and that they belonged to the domestic sphere, being something on the order of old wives’ tales. In an 1811 letter to their friend Clemens Brentano, the Brothers Grimm had drafted a call to cultural arms, an “appeal” that would be sent out to “all friends of old German poetry and history” (Steig 1914: 164). The plan was to collect “all the oral tales from the entire German fatherland” – *Vaterland* was a term that the Grimms used self-consciously even as they were seeking to standardize stories told in a “mother tongue” (*Muttersprache*) (166).

Isn’t the poetry of the people (*Volks poesie*) the vital lifeblood drawn from all the [German people’s] deeds that continues to live on? And is it not like that because otherwise history could not reach the people and they would have access to no other history?”

In practice, that lifeblood came, curiously enough, not from epics and myths but from “the fairy tales, the evening conversations, and the stories told in spinning rooms” (166). Poetry and history operate in tandem to produce a cultural heritage for an imagined community of the *Volk* (Zipes 2016: 22).

Just how did history come to be encoded in poetry to fashion and preserve collective cultural memory? In his essay “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nicolai Leskov,” Walter Benjamin tells us about the steady accretion of historical memory in works of art. Storytellers, like the artisans of old, and like nature itself, understand the value of “patience” in the creative process (Benjamin 2002: 150). The poet Paul Valéry, wrote about “perfect things in nature, flawless pearls – full-bodied mature wines, truly developed creatures” (2002: 150). These objects are all “the precious product of a long chain of causes that are all similar to one another,” and the “accumulation of such causes,” Benjamin adds, “reaches its temporal limit only at perfection” (2002: 150). Benjamin describes the protracted process of layering required to produce beautiful man-made objects that are then handed down from one generation to the next:

Miniatures, ivory carvings elaborated to the point of perfection, stones that are perfect in polish and engraving, lacquer work or paintings in which a series of

thin, transparent layers are placed one on top of the other – all these products of sustained, sacrificing effort are vanishing, and the time is past in which time did not matter.

(2002: 150)

Oral narratives also derive their beauty in many ways from layering. What Benjamin mourns in the modern “short story” is its lack of connection to oral traditions, with the consequent loss of the layering effect achieved from the fact that a story has been repeated and retold by successive generations of storytellers. For Benjamin, the finest stories emerge as part of a collective process, with each teller adding something new until a sufficient number of layers have accumulated to give the story texture and depth.

Benjamin captures what modern critics have called palimpsestic memory, a vibrant process of building and demolishing, all the while leaving traces of the stories antecedent to the new telling. As Max Silverman puts it in his study of the concept: “the principle of the superimposition of different traces to condense surface and depth, present and past, and the visible and the invisible remains a powerful way of envisaging the work of memory” (2013: 25). Stories are forever being rewritten while the traces of previous versions are partially erased but also preserved, destroyed but also restored. And what is produced, in the end, but a palimpsestic narrative with traces of heterogeneous tellings of a story?

What quickly becomes evident is how the palimpsest metaphor captures, in ways that other metaphors for storytelling (cauldron, tapestry, yarn, web), do not, the diachronic dimension of folk narratives, how they transform and evolve over time, always preserving traces of their history. The synchronic axis, by contrast, enables us to use a different optic to focus on how folktales use variegated building blocks we call tropes, mythemes, archetypes, motifs, or memes – self-contained particles more than anything else. Lévi-Strauss viewed such elements of myth as something akin to the fragments of glass in a kaleidoscope that function as building blocks for larger patterns, structures, and designs. Whatever name we use, the concept itself is important in helping us recognize how elements from tales migrate into new versions and are repurposed to renew their cultural energy. The Grimms’ “Cinderella” loses a slipper, which turns up a couple of centuries later when Carrie loses her stilettos in an episode of *Sex and the City* (Season 6, Episode 9, 2003). Folktales ceaselessly preserve the old and the cultural memory of the past even as they engage in a form of repetition compulsion that is transformative, always making something new, as Ezra Pound put it in another context. “It would seem that mythological worlds have been built up only to be shattered again, and that new worlds were built from the fragments,” Lévi-Strauss began his famous essay on “The Structural Study of Myth” with those words from Franz Boas (Lévi-Strauss 1955: 428).

The third volume of the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* offers commentary on the tales, and it gives us an inside look at the decisions made about what to include and what to cut. Looking through those comments, it quickly becomes evident that the Grimms chose to follow the path of winnowing the collection, narrowing the focus, and keeping it “Germanic” rather than considering questions of connectivity and kinship on an international stage. A note about “Bluebeard,” for example, declares an intention to eliminate one version of the story they had recorded because

it resembled too closely a French tale written down by Charles Perrault. That there is a version of “Rapunzel” with a heroine named Petrosinella in Basile’s *Pentamerone* is acknowledged, but only in passing. Less prominent than the references to European cognates are brief notes such as the one about a “Bechuanan” (today we would say Botswanan) version of “The Singing Bone.” Suddenly we sit up and take notice, more so today than in the past when, like the Grimms, scholars working in the field of what has become known as fairy-tale studies found their vision clouded by a single-minded focus on the world of European wonderlore.¹ Still, the notes and commentary to the tales, if not the tales themselves, reveal that the Grimms, like Herder before them, were deeply committed to comparative research and were aware that the stories in their collection had analogues in many European countries, Italy in particular, but the world over as well (see Kamenetsky 1992: 25–6 on the Grimms’ orientation toward comparative studies).

Had the Grimms decided to highlight the analogues by including some in the collection or at the least foregrounding their existence by discussing them in the preface instead of relegating them to notes, they would have placed the emphasis on international kinship rather than national solidarity and the “innocence” and “purity” of *Volks poesie*. “The Singing Bone,” for example, offered a luminous opportunity to showcase the international, and the Grimms would not have had to look far and wide to document instances of that story from the world over. But they could also have turned to other, more familiar stories from the so-called European canon and revealed that they are not so German, or French, or Italian after all.

Let us look for a moment at some of Little Red Riding Hood’s soulmates. In 1889 the Scottish social anthropologist James G. Frazer published an article entitled “A South African Red Riding-hood.” The story he translated had been recorded in 1842 by two French missionaries, who, as they stated in the preface to the account of their travels, hoped to “seek out unknown tribes, to open up communication with their chiefs, to mark out plans suitable for missionary stations, to extend the influence of Christianity and civilization” (Arbousset and Daumas 1968: vi). They also wished to give their readers some African examples of the “old wives’ stories with which mothers put their little ones to sleep, and inculcate betimes the first principles of Bechuana morality – that is, submission to parental authority, and dread of the Marimos” (Arbousset and Daumas 1968: vi).

“The South African Red Riding-hood” turns out to be a story called “Tsélané and the Marimo,” and the chief figure does not have a cap or a hood, nor is she wearing anything red. And her story is closer to the Grimms’ “The Wolf and the Kids” than to “Little Red Riding Hood” – though the two tale types, as folklorists have long recognized, are closely related, since both stage encounters between innocent child and monster, one as a home invasion, the other as a meeting in the woods. Who rescues Tsélané? Not a huntsman but some “little girls” who report to the mother that a Marimo, or cannibal, has captured her daughter. And what about “The Story of the Cannibal Mother and Her Children”? What happens when we read the following in a tale about a woman who devours her two children and is pursued by a beautiful bird, seeking vengeance?

The bird came slowly toward her, still singing its song. When they met, the bird took the axe from the woman, and still sang the same song.

The cannibal began to be afraid.
She said to the bird: "Give me my axe; I do not wish for your flesh now."
The bird tore one of her arms off.
She said: "I am going away now; give me what is mine."
The bird would not listen to her, but continued its song.
She said again: "Give me my axe and let me go. My husband at home is very hungry. I want to go and cook food for him.

(Theal 1886: 141–2)

Is this tale from George McCall Theal's *Kaffir Folk-Lore* a European import – a version of "The Juniper Tree"? Or is it an African tale that found its way to Europe? Or were both tales invented independently of each other? Maternal tenderness is transformed into treachery here too, and the beauty of song, as in "The Juniper Tree," leads to revenge, redemption, and resurrection.

The Grimms knew there was no easy answer to the vexed question of origins. They speculated that fairy tales began as myths, and that, once divested of religious meaning, they entered the domestic sphere to function as forms of secular entertainment – the "television and pornography" of their time, the "life-lightening trash of pre-literate peoples," as John Updike once put it (Updike 1983: 662). But where did those myths come from? That they were versions of Indo-European myths was a belief the two brothers embraced early on (see Peppard 1999: 49–50 and Ziolkowski 2008: 20). In the Grimms' own lifetime, the renowned Sanskrit scholar Theodor Benfey asserted that most folktales had their origins in the Indian subcontinent, and that they traveled through Persia to European countries. Both the Grimms and Benfey relied on models of monogenesis and diffusion, by contrast with later theories of polygenesis, which implied independent invention at different sites.

What quickly becomes apparent in contemplating the rising star of such works as the Indian collection of tales known as the *Panchatantra* is the importance of print dissemination in achieving cultural authority. A written account almost automatically becomes the source for later versions. Claude Lévi-Strauss told us long ago that the people we call "primitive" belong to cultures "without writing" (1979: 15). Anthropologists, he argues, have fallen into the trap of assuming that the so-called primitive mind can be neither disinterested nor intellectual, because it is so fixed on survival, when in fact all humans are moved by a desire to make sense of the world around them. "It is probably one of the many conclusions of anthropological thinking that, notwithstanding the cultural differences between the several parts of mankind, the human mind is everywhere one and the same and that it has the same capacities," he famously declared (Lévi-Strauss 1979: 19). Somehow the failure to move from oral transmission to a print culture became a marker of mimicry rather than invention.

The search for origins is, then, something of a snipe hunt, with a dangerous intellectual impulse leading scholars to privilege cultures that developed writing systems early on, thereby turning them into the dominant and authoritative source of folkloric inventions. Analogues come to be invested with causality, so that Version B is not just linked to Version A, written down first, but also derived from it.

The story of origins and transmission is deeply complicated, and it becomes vexed and contested when we explore another inflection point, this time the move from

print culture to visual media and other new platforms in an age of digital technologies. If India dominated the fairy-tale landscape for folklorists and anthropologists working in the nineteenth century, another star began to rise farther to the West in the twentieth century. The Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* assumed an importance far beyond what the two brothers ever imagined, and in Anglo-American cultures, German folklore took root in ways that made it feel to many as if it were indigenous lore. Certainly, in the USA, it successfully displaced American, Native American, and African-American myths, fables, and fairy tales, assuming cultural dominance via popular entertainments and mass culture. How did this happen and what led to the success of *German* folklore in countries that, in a further touch of irony, were often locked in combat with that particular nation?

When the Grimms published their collection of fairy tales, not many stood up to cheer the enterprise. While the brothers waited patiently for reviews from such luminaries as Goethe, minor talents like Johann Gustav Büsching (whose own collection of tales had been eviscerated by Jacob Grimm), and Friedrich Rühls (whose book on the *Edda* had been attacked by Wilhelm Grimm) seized the chance to get even with reviews that compared the volume unfavorably with other folktale collections. Rühls went so far as to denounce the large quantities of "the most pathetic and tasteless material imaginable" (see Tatar 1978: 15). This was not a book to be put into the hands of children, he cautioned. The stories may be short and simple, but some are likely to disturb children and lead to "uncomfortable feelings" (Tatar 1978: 15).

The Grimms' slavish fidelity to oral folk traditions, in particular to the crude language of the folk, came under especially heavy fire. August Wilhelm Schlegel and Clemens Brentano felt that a bit of artifice would have gone a long way toward improving the art of the folk and toward making the tales more appealing. "If you want to display children's clothing, you can do that quite well without bringing out an outfit that has buttons torn off it, dirt smeared on it, and a shirt hanging out of the pants" Brentano wrote to his friend Achim von Arnim (Tatar 1978: 16). Future editions ought to state that the book was "for parents, who can select stories for retelling." Other readers were less charitable. Heinrich Voß described the collection (with the exception of a few tales) as "real junk" (Tatar 1978: 16).

Cleaning up the *Kindermärchen* was a job that the Grimms took seriously over the decades, as they progressively adapted, revised, edited, polished, standardized, and miniaturized the stories to develop what came to be known as a *Märchenstil*, a style both child-friendly, but also in general terms reader-friendly. Unlike many of the sprawling, expansive oral narratives recorded by anthropologists, who aim for fidelity to the letter and the spirit, the Grimms succeeded in producing eminently readable print versions of the stories they had collected from multiple sources, many oral, but many also in written form.

The very first story in the Grimms' collection, "The Frog King," gives us an instructive example of how the brothers worked hard to develop a literary style that would capture the attention of those reading a story that had once relied on gestures, intonation, call and response, in-jokes, and other performative strategies to enliven a communal event. Here is how the manuscript version begins:

The king's youngest daughter went out into the forest and sat down by the edge of a cool well. Then she took out a golden ball and began playing with it. All of a

sudden it rolled down into the well. She watched as it sank into the deep waters, and she stood at the well and felt very sad. All at once a frog stuck its head out of the water and said, “What are you complaining about?”

(Rölleke 1975: 144)

Two years later, for the first print version, the tale included more expansive descriptions of actions and thoughts, but by the final edition of 1857, the Grimms had spun straw to gold, with a poetic turn to their prose:

Once upon a time, when wishes still came true, there lived a king who had beautiful daughters. The youngest was so lovely that even the sun, which had seen so many things, was filled with wonder when it shone upon her face.

There was a deep, dark forest near the king’s castle, and in that forest, beneath an old linden tree, was a spring. Whenever the weather turned really hot, the king’s daughter would go out into the woods and sit down at the edge of the cool spring. And if she was bored, she would take out her golden ball, throw it up in the air, and catch it. That was her favorite plaything.

One day it so happened that the golden ball didn’t end up in the princess’s hands when she reached up to catch it, but fell down on the ground and rolled right into the water. The princess followed the ball with her eyes, but it disappeared, and the spring was so deep that you couldn’t even begin to see the bottom. The princess burst out crying, and she wept louder and louder, unable to stop herself. Suddenly a voice could be heard over her wailing: “What’s going on, princess? Stones would be moved to tears if they could hear you.”

The princess turned around to try to figure out where the voice was coming from and caught sight of a frog, which had stuck its big old ugly head out of the water.

(Grimm and Grimm 2010: 3–4)

Over the years through successive editions of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the two brothers took the advice of critics and removed allusions to pregnancy (Rapunzel’s clothes no longer “fit” and get “tight” after the visits of the prince) and Hans Dumm, who can impregnate women just by looking at them, is banned from the collection. The brothers no longer insisted on fidelity to oral traditions, but admitted, in the preface to the second edition, that they had taken pains to remove “every phrase unsuitable for children”; furthermore, they expressed the hope that their stories could serve as a “manual of manners” (see Tatar 1978: 3–38).

What the Brothers Grimm had begun as a project with distinctly nationalistic aspirations ironically turned into a cultural heritage that moved in the direction of creating an international repertoire, a shared body of stories that acquired a recognition factor beyond the Grimms’ wildest dreams of commercial success. The decision to reorient the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* to young audiences was, whether consciously or not, a bid also to take early advantage of the rise of print capitalism and the growing market for child-friendly books designed less to warn and punish than to expand the imagination. It inspired Edgar Taylor to adapt and translate 29 German fairy tales in a volume published in 1823, with illustrations by George Cruikshank. The book was an instant success, followed by a second volume in 1826, and by a

torrent of new editions, many pirated, among them *Grimm's Goblins* and *Gammer Grethel*. Taylor was committed to inaugurating an era in which "our children shall be allowed once more to regale themselves with that mild food which will enliven their imaginations" (Taylor 1821: 146–7). And others, including the publisher of *Grimm's Goblins*, echoed Taylor's enthusiasm for turning fairy tales into children's fare: "The Brothers Grimm, with an imagination as rich and fanciful as any writers of Fairy Tales, leave most kindred writers far behind in the especial adaptability of their tales to the tastes of children" (Anon. 1876: viii).

If the Grimms stepped-up violence in successive editions of the tales (evil must be punished in the moral calculus of the fairy-tale world), Taylor went in the opposite direction and lightened up the tales by softening harsh punishments and adding whimsical turns to the plots. The Grimms ended their "Snow White" with a scene depicting the stepmother dancing to her death in red-hot iron shoes, while Taylor describes her last moments in the following way: "she choked with rage, and fell down and died" (Taylor 1864: 157). "Rumpel-stilts-ken," in his British incarnation, does not stamp his foot and tear himself in two pieces, but instead he dashes "his right foot in a rage so deep into the floor, that he was forced to lay hold of it with both hands to pull it out" (Taylor 1864: 72).

German Popular Stories inspired the publication of the Grimms' so-called *Kleine Ausgabe* (small edition), a compact, child-friendly edition of the tales, the publication of which was evidently designed to coincide with the Christmas giving season. As Jacob Grimm put it, the British translation had found such a powerful "popular response" that he too wished to broaden the audience and "bring out a *small German edition* which, like the English, would contain only a selection of stories in a *single volume*" (Kamenetsky 1992: 199). Miniaturization paid off, and the compact edition quickly outpaced its multi-volume rival, with 36 editions rolling off the presses by 1886 (Kamenetsky 1992: 49).

An American version of *German Popular Stories* was published in Boston in 1826, later reissued under the title: *Gammer Grethel; or, German Fairy Tales and Popular Stories, from the Collection of MM. Grimm and Other Sources*. Edited by Eliza Follen, who, with her husband Charles Follen, were both passionate abolitionists, the volume appeared with a plain cloth cover – not the calf binding with gold letters of the London edition. With a frontispiece depicting an imaginary scene of storytelling, the volume created the impression that its contents were drawn from tales told by what was described as "an honest good-humored farmer's wife" (Bronner 1998: 201). This edition was followed by *Grimm's Goblins* in 1867, a volume initially bearing a subtitle indicating that the tales had been "selected from the Household stories of the Brothers Grimm." That subtitle was, significantly, changed to "a collection of fairy tales *for the young*," signaling a change in status. Fairy tales had found a new home in the culture of childhood. "Imported, displaced, the power of the nationally distinctive German *Märchen* now resided in their *transnational* status," one critic writes (Schacker 2003: 16), referring to the British appropriation of the tales, a move that, as we shall see, was shadowed by the even more powerful annexation of the tales in the USA, once Disney developed and refined a new visual delivery system for fairy tales.

The American adoption and popularization of German folklore marked a move that consolidated the dominance of the Grimms, ironically turning tales that had

been recruited for a nationalist agenda into an international canon. To be sure, there was resistance from some educators, who railed against the harsh violence in the tales: “The folktales mirror all too loyally the entire medieval worldview and culture with all its stark prejudice, its crudeness and barbarities as they are so characteristic for those dark times” (Schacker 2003: 233). Writers like L. Frank Baum worried about all the “horrible” and “bloodcurdling” incidents of the old-time European fairy tales of Grimm and Andersen and aspired to write stories that preserved the wonder and joy found in those tales, leaving out their “heartaches” and “nightmares” (Baum 1960: iii). (Oddly, he began his own story with a dead witch and ended it with the relief of returning home from the many terrors of Oz to which Dorothy is subjected.)

Today’s debates about fairy tales, whether children need fantasy, monsters, and symbolic stories or whether they should be shielded from violent entertainments, repeat history, for some twentieth-century educators began, like the British, to recognize the value of imagination, while others promoted the wholesale condemnation of fairy tales. Hamilton Wright Mabie, who edited *Fairy Tales Every Child Should Know* (1905) and wrote the introduction to *Fairy Tales from Grimm* (1909), urged US educators to bring the German stories into the curriculum, “for the child has not only a faculty of observation and aptitudes for work of all kinds, he has also the great gift of imagination” (Mabie 1909: 15). And the fairy tale, Mabie added, “outranks the arithmetic, the grammar, the geography, the manuals of science; for without the aid of the imagination none of these books is really comprehensible” (Mabie 1905: xiv). For Mabie, the tales not only open the doors to imagination and foster that faculty in the child, they are also a form of poetry reflecting the activity of “the young imagination of the race” (Mabie 1905: v). Imagination is also, of course, precisely the term that Disney Studios used over a century later to validate the uses of enchantment and to create, through what is now termed “imagineering,” a new portal to the world of wonderlore.

Given the prominence of the Grimms’ fairy tales in American culture, it is no surprise that Walt Disney decided to turn the story of “Snow White” into his first feature-length animated film. Taylor’s *German Popular Stories* was supplanted by a range of new and often more faithful translations from John Edward Taylor’s *The Fairy Ring* (1846) and Mrs H.H.B. Paull’s *Grimms’ Fairy Tales* (1872) to Lucy Crane’s *Household Stories* (1882), and Margaret Hunt’s *Grimm’s Household Tales* (1884) (for analysis of these editions, see Sutton 1996). These volumes proliferated in the USA, circulating also in pirated editions and adaptations. The young Walt Disney may well have encountered the Grimms’ “Snow White” for the first time in one of these books, but he also saw a silent film version based on a nineteenth-century German play translated for American audiences, then staged on Broadway (Allan 2000: 38). Following its US premier, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) was dubbed into ten languages and distributed to 46 countries, including Germany, where it became the Führer’s favorite film.

The *New York Times* commended the genius of “Mr. Disney’s Snow White and her quaint little friends” for figuring out how to navigate the export market: “In their innocence it never occurred to them that there were such things as national boundaries, opposing systems of government, wars or threats of war” (Anon. 1938: n.p.). Instead, as “basic folklore,” they generate “a universal human sympathy.” They have become “folk-films,” the article adds, without a touch of irony or flash of recognition

that the folk-film aimed for something diametrically opposed to the intentions of, for lack of a better term, *Volk-Film*: “As folktales were once passed from tribe to tribe and nation to nation, so that few societies have lacked something resembling the Cinderella story, or the Aladdin story, so we may have folk-films.” In other words, American folklore was made new with an animated film that had as its source a German fairy tale.

By the twentieth century, the German corpus of fairy tales had been transformed so powerfully through translations (often as free as Edgar Taylor’s), adaptations, and re-mediations that it could go global without a second thought about the nationalistic aspirations of the collectors in putting together their volume. In a supreme touch of irony, the film that paved the way for global dominance of the Grimm name and canon (they had the good fortune to have the perfect surname for branding) was not only Hitler’s favorite film but also a story that is freighted in racial terms, with a perfect Aryan heroine whose skin is “white as snow.” (In this context, it is worth noting that many folktales about mother/daughter sexual rivalry do not code for skin and hair color.) To be sure the move from communal storytelling circles to print culture to mass culture signifies less a new form of folklore, as the *New York Times* suggested, than a corporate top-down model of creativity. And yet every “setback” suffered by the fairy tale, in its ur-form or in its endless variety, has the advantage of releasing new forms of creative energy, and somehow the story has not only survived translation, transmediation, and transplantation but has also continued to thrive and replicate itself in what Darwin called “endless forms most beautiful and wonderful.” And before we know it, presto, we all have something to talk about across national, cultural, and linguistic borders.

Studying the Grimms’ corpus of fairy tales today means accepting what Donald Haase has called the challenge of understanding “fairy-tale production and reception precisely as acts of translation, transformation, and transcultural communication” and realizing that “nineteenth-century romantic models of national, cultural, and ethnic purity” will not have a place where fairy tales are seen as “transcultural texts” (2010: 30). Once upon a time, it seemed logical to frame cultural spaces in national terms (our disciplines have long been organized that way and are only gradually giving way to new interdisciplinary formations), but in an era of global awareness that self-consciously acknowledges hybridity, creolization, multivocality, transmediation, and hypertextuality, fairy-tale production and analysis remind us that the cultural work performed by these “simple stories” has always been marked by heterogeneity, complexity, and sophistication at the deepest levels (see especially Bacchilega 2013 and Haring 2003).

NOTE

1. I propose to use the term wonderlore for stories that we misleadingly call fairy tales or folklore, with the one term pointing to the presence of supernatural sprites who are rarely there and the other term pointing to a collective creation when in fact many such stories are transmitted to us through literary channels. As a term, wonderlore captures both the ontological status of the narrated world and its epistemological challenges. We wander into worlds filled with wonders, and soon we begin to wonder in the sense hailed by Plato and Aristotle as the beginning of philosophy.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

BY FORGOTTEN HANDS

The role of translation in the emergence of the fairy tale



Gillian Lathey

When fairy tales travel across linguistic frontiers an act of translation takes place at some stage on their journey. The transposition of an oral or written text from one language to another, whether by a bilingual traveler retelling a tale heard abroad for a home audience, a collective relocation of stories by a migrating group, or a professional literary translator sitting at desk or screen, adds an inter-lingual and intercultural dimension to an already densely layered narrative. Once tales were transmitted through the written rather than the spoken word, it became possible to trace these transitions between narrative traditions in different languages. Just as the Grimm Brothers adjusted the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* to make them appear to be the voice of the people, so their first English translator, Edgar Taylor, guided his version towards an English-speaking and child audience through selection and censorship. Translations also, in turn, generate new fairy tales in the receiving culture. Ruth Bottigheimer concludes speculatively from her analysis of similarities between Pierre de Larivey's French translation of Giovan Francesco Straparola's Italian story of Constantino and his cat in *Les Facétieuses Nuits de Straparole* (1573), and Charles Perrault's "Le chat botté" in *Histoires; ou, Contes du temps passé* (1697), that "Paragraph for paragraph, Perrault's story matched de Larivey's, which must have lain open on the writing desk before him as he composed his courtly version of Straparola's original story" (Bottigheimer 2002a: 26). Whether this precise scenario actually took place or not, there is no doubt that the European fairy tale is indebted to translated French as well as original Italian editions of Straparola's tales (Canepa 1997).

Despite such correspondences and lines of development, the role of translation in the emergence and formation of the fairy-tale tradition is often overlooked. Jack Zipes has argued, with reference to the global popularity of Western fairy tales such as "Cinderella" and "Red Riding Hood," that there exists a "non-recognition of translation" (Zipes 2006: 198), partly because of multiple retellings that have gradually erased or manipulated traces of the source culture, but also because translators are accorded little or no credit for their work. Within the field of translation studies, Lawrence Venuti (2008) has analyzed the historical "invisibility" of the translator; and yet, as Andrew Chesterman has asserted, translators are "agents of change, not just passive recipients of causal impulses" (Chesterman 1998: 219). Translators are indeed subject to a number

of “causal impulses” arising from the social, cultural or political conditions and trade partnerships that determine translation flow between languages, but they also command a personal history of language learning, literary finesse and idiosyncrasies of style and linguistic choice. Translators and their publishers make decisions that define the nature, purpose and audience of the target text, for example, on the degree of cultural adaptation that will produce either a “domesticated” version in which foodstuffs, coinage, names or localities are changed into those of the target culture, or a “foreignized” one in which cultural markers are retained (Venuti 2008). An assumption that translations of fairy tales are simply exact reproductions of source texts therefore denies the filtering and transformational process involved; in fact, source and target texts may differ radically in style and material presentation, or in cultural or ideological content. One of the most notable instances of the radical manipulation of source texts and of the cultural impact of a translation is that provided by French scholar and translator Antoine Galland’s version of *Les Mille et une Nuit; contes Arabes* (1704–1717). Galland fashioned this publication from his own translations into French of various Arabic manuscripts, with the addition of tales told to him by a Syrian Christian in France, and adapted his sources by removing content that might be deemed offensive (Mack 2005: 471). As translator, synthesizer, censor and importer of Arabic texts, Galland was instrumental in creating a passion for the oriental which, once an anonymous translation appeared in English in 1706 as *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, swept through London and was later described by Walter Bagehot in 1859 as a kind of “intellectual hashish” (cited in Caracciolo 1988: 34). Orientalism, that artificial and controversial western imaginative creation, and the tide wave of fiction, songs, music, pantomimes, dance and fine art that it inspired, therefore owes much to Galland. His reshaping of Arabic texts represents an extreme act of cultural appropriation, but its legacy has been far-reaching in setting the future pattern of a type of “oriental” narrative in the western world.

During the emergence of the fairy tale, a term used here to denote tales that include the marvelous, magical or supernatural as well as tales based in everyday reality, storytellers and their translators have spun a vast and intricate web of international exchange of which Galland’s translation is a particularly striking example. This chapter will indicate the role of translation across the mercurial history of the fairy tale through additional egregious instances of the difference a translator can make to the audience for a set of texts and their reception. Analysis of the first, seminal English versions of tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm demonstrates the manner in which translators Robert Samber and Edgar Taylor respectively helped to determine the future of these fairy-tale collections as reading matter for children, and is accompanied by insights into the enduring resonance of their versions. Next, a brief discussion of retranslation indicates differing reasons for revisiting a source text and, finally, this chapter will explore the phenomenon of relay translation across more than one language, embodied in the trajectory of the *Arabian Nights* tales from Arabic into French and then into other languages.

TALES FOR CHILDREN? ROBERT SAMBER’S TRANSLATION OF THE TALES OF CHARLES PERRAULT

French fairy tales began to appear in English in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries at a time when translation was not a profession, but rather – according

to the *Oxford History of Literary Translation* for the period 1660–1790 – a means of earning income by anyone who happened to read languages other than English (Hopkins and Rogers 2005: 86). Anonymity and the use of initials or phrases such as “translated by several hands” were common, so that an English version of tales from *Les Contes des Fées* of Mme d’Aulnoy of 1716 is attributed to “B.H.”, and additional anonymous translations appeared in 1707 and 1721 (Palmer and Palmer 1973). Translations of French tales were to have a lasting impact, not least in the adoption of the phrase “fairy tales,” directly translated from Mme d’Aulnoy’s *Contes des Fées* of 1697, and the frequently used title “Mother Goose tales” taken from the translation of a poster advertising “contes de ma mère loye” in the frontispiece illustration of the first English edition of Perrault’s *Histoires; ou, Contes du temps passé: Avec des Moralitez* (1697).

Robert Samber’s translation of Perrault’s collection as *Histories or Tales of Past Times with Morals* in 1729 is taken from a Dutch reprint of the French text of the 1721 edition (Barchilon and Pettit 1960). Samber’s earlier translation of Thomas-Simon Gueullette’s “Chinese tales” (“Les Aventures merveilleuses du mandarin Fum Hoam. Contes chinois”) published in 1725, probably to capitalize on the vogue for oriental tales in the wake of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, demonstrates a predisposition towards the marvelous and exotic – as indeed does the existence among Samber’s papers in the Bodleian library at the University of Oxford of handwritten drafts and unpublished fragments of stories featuring animals, princes and princesses. It is, therefore, no surprise that Samber should turn his attention to the French fairy tales that were beginning to gain ground with the British reading public.

Whereas Perrault had produced a collection of polished versions of nursery stories to serve as entertainment for the French aristocracy, however, Samber seems to have had the child reader in mind from the start. The dedication of his translation to the Right Honourable Countess of Granville commends Perrault’s morally instructive tales to her young son, the Lord Carteret, along with other “Infant Relatives,” and praises what Samber calls “fables” as conveyors of wisdom to the young. Furthermore, he responds robustly to previous criticism of some of the tales as “low and childish,” asserting that “therein consists their Excellency. They therefore who made this as an Objection, did not seem very well to understand what they said; they should have reflected that they are designed for Children” (Perrault 1729, A4 verso). In Samber’s eyes, therefore, the stories in Perrault’s collection were essentially children’s tales – albeit dressed up for the French court – and he intended to return them to their rightful readers.

Samber’s mediating voice addresses young readers on occasions throughout the tales, as he adds footnotes or comments that are not part of Perrault’s text. In “The Sleeping Beauty,” local villagers tell the prince who finds the moribund castle hidden in thick woods a story that an ogre had lived there. Samber inserts into the tale a definition of “ogre” that conveys a tongue-in-cheek admonition typical of the storyteller accustomed to speaking playfully to children’s fears: “Now an Ogre is a giant that has long teeth and claws, with a raw head and bloody bones, that runs away with naughty little boys and girls, and eats them up” (Perrault 1729: 43). Elsewhere he uses domesticating strategies such as “custards” to replace “galettes” in “Little Red Riding Hood” and the naming of the child in that tale as “Biddy,” a common form of the girl’s name Bridget. In other tales Samber offers explanations of the meaning of the untranslated

names of the eponymous heroes of “Riquet à la Houpe” and “Little Poucet,” indicating that “*Houpe* signifies a Tuft” and that the child protagonist’s name “signifies little Thumb” in the second instance. There are, too, a few touches of early eighteenth-century colloquial English, for instance when Cinderella dare not tell her father of her treatment because he “would have rattled her off” (75), a situation that many child readers of that era would no doubt instantly recognize. Thus, Samber adjusts Perrault’s tales to place them more overtly and exclusively in the realm of childhood.

Samber’s translation gradually permeated English children’s and fairy-tale culture albeit, as Ruth Bottigheimer has demonstrated, with “near-glacial slowness” (Bottigheimer 2002b: 3) since – despite Samber’s alterations – the English translation was initially printed for an adult market. Nonetheless, dual language textbook editions for school use sold well, and both “Cinderella” and “Little Red Riding Hood,” with the same illustrations as in the 1729 edition, are included in a reading primer, *A Pretty Book for Children; or, an Easy Guide to the English Tongue* first issued circa 1744. The same two tales appear in *The Top Book of All, for Little Masters and Misses*, first published in about 1760: in each case the text is definitely Samber’s with minor alterations. It was not until the early nineteenth century that Perrault’s tales began to appear in more influential collections, notably in Benjamin Tabart’s *Collection of Popular Stories for the Nursery; Newly Translated and Revised from the French, Italian and Old English Writers*, first published in 1804. A comparison of Samber’s “Cinderilla” with the “Cinderella” in the Tabart collection reveals that the basic structure of the story and much of the detail are as in Samber’s translation. Stand-alone editions of selected tales by Perrault were also published at this time; *The Celebrated Fairy Tales of Mother Goose* published by J. Harris in 1817, for example, is clearly indebted to Samber’s translation.

Later editions include Andrew Lang’s use of Samber’s translation as the basis for reworked versions of seven tales from Perrault in *The Blue Fairy Book* of 1889 (Henguely 2013), and an edition entitled *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* credited to Samber by the publisher Harrap in 1922. A popular picture-book version illustrated by Errol Le Cain of 1972 is, despite the omission of Cinderella’s second visit to the ball, a modernized version of Samber’s translation and, as Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère (2011) has indicated, Angela Carter’s retranslation of “Cinderella,” published in 1977, deliberately takes Samber’s translation as the starting point for a feminist revision of the tale. Editions of the fairy tales of Charles Perrault in English for both children and adults are, then, indebted to an eighteenth-century freemason, jobbing translator and dilettante author whose translation is evaluated thus by Brian Alderson, children’s literature historian and former children’s book editor of *The Times*: “It’s my view that not many have equalled Robert Samber at the very start of things” (Alderson 1998: 15).

EDGAR TAYLOR AND THE “SMALL EDITION” OF GRIMMS’ TALES

If Robert Samber’s text became the basis of numerous English-language editions of tales from Perrault, Edgar Taylor’s first translation into English almost 100 years later of a selection of stories by the Brothers Grimm had significant consequences both for their format and global reception. Taylor, too, favored a child audience,

although his initial interest in the tales, like that of the Grimms, was academic and philological. Taylor, a lawyer who had a passionate interest in German folklore and medieval verse, translated a selection of Grimms' tales with the assistance of his friend David Jardine, and published them under the title of *German Popular Stories* in 1823. Taylor's preface hints at his intended audience: "The translators were first induced to complete this little work by the eager relish with which a few of the tales were received by the young friends to whom they were narrated" (Grimm 1823: iii). Moreover, Taylor had the specific aim of rescuing child readers from the regime of moral tales anchored in everyday reality and the so-called "scientific" or rational learning of the period and wanted to promote a revival of the imaginative qualities of stories for children:

this is the age of reason, not of imagination; and the loveliest dreams of fairy innocence are considered as vain and frivolous. Much might be argued against this rigid and philosophic (or rather unphilosophic) exclusion of works of fancy and fiction.

(1823: iv)

Although literate children had continued to gain access to romances and fairy tales – including Samber's translations of tales from Perrault – in chapbook and published versions across the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, leading contemporary children's authors and educators had condemned fantastical fiction, including the fairy tale. Maria Edgeworth's criticism of fairy tales in the preface to *The Parent's Assistant* of 1796, for example, culminates in the question: "Why should the mind be filled with fantastic visions, instead of useful knowledge?" (Edgeworth 1800: xi). It was opinions of this kind that Taylor sought to counteract in his translation of Grimms' tales.

With young readers in mind, Taylor undertook a filtering process that began with the selection of 58 tales for translation, about a third of the tales from the first revised edition of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* of 1819 that was his principal source. Taylor mentions many stories "of great merit" which "the scrupulous fastidiousness of modern taste, especially in works likely to attract the attention of youth, warned them to pass by" (Grimm 1823: xi). Of the tales he did choose, Taylor amalgamated some, censored others, omitted passages and added extraneous material, especially to the second volume of the *Popular Stories* of 1826. By his own admission in translator's notes to both the 1823 and 1826 volumes, Taylor sought to modify religious references and to tone down violence, changing "devil" to "giant" and refusing to name a cave "hell" in "The Giant with the Three Golden Hairs" (1823: 236). Further indications of censorship are provided by omissions, which include the removal of the decapitation by a father of his children in "Faithful John," the chopping off of a finger in "The Robber Bridegroom," and the broth brewed from the limbs of a murdered child in "The Juniper Tree." In his comprehensive case studies of English translations of Grimms' tales across the nineteenth century, Martin Sutton (1996) presents detailed analyses of Taylor's censoring hand and editorial license.

Taylor's landmark translation of Grimms' tales and his promotion of the folk muse, of the fanciful and the imaginative, made an invaluable contribution to the sea-change that was taking place in the mid nineteenth century in critical opinion in

the UK on the kinds of texts children should read. Yet the influence of Taylor's version was to spread far beyond the English-speaking world, since the format of a one-volume edition with illustrations greatly impressed the Grimm Brothers. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm wrote to Taylor commending his translation and praising George Cruikshank's engravings (letter of 25 June 1823; Hartwig 1898: 7–9). It was the fluency of Taylor's translation as well as Cruikshank's memorable vignettes that sowed the seeds for Wilhelm Grimm's decision to adopt a more child-friendly narrative tone in later editions of the tales, and to produce an illustrated *Kleine Ausgabe*, or small edition. In a letter to his publisher, Wilhelm Grimm hopes for the wider distribution of the book, since not everyone could buy the full three-volume work (Zirnbauer 1975: 203). The "small edition" of 50 tales appeared in 1825, and although not a huge commercial success in Germany, is a rare instance of the effect of a translator and his publisher on subsequent editions of a source text. Illustrated editions of selected tales became the model for the future publication of Grimms' tales in Germany and beyond. Jennifer Schacker (2003) has argued that Taylor was instrumental in the commodification of the tales and the transformation of their audience, citing numerous editions of Taylor's translation in the nineteenth century in both the UK and the USA: "no one has done more to shape contemporary conceptions of the fairy tale – its content, tone, function, origin, and intended audience – than English solicitor and amateur folklorist Edgar Taylor, primary author of *German Popular Stories*" (Schacker 2003: 14). Taylor's translation with the Cruikshank engravings lives on in the twenty-first century as a Penguin Popular Classic.

Samber's version of Perrault's tales and Taylor's translation of tales by the Brothers Grimm remained influential, but were succeeded by many new versions of both collections in English. Retranslation, defined as a new rendering of a source text that has already been translated, may iron out infelicities or errors and present a fresh interpretation of a tale, although Alderson's opinion of Samber's close, astringent translation of Perrault's collection is a reminder that some older versions do possess literary quality and that a retranslation is not necessarily an improved translation. The retranslation of fairy tales and the commissioning of a "new" translation occurs for a number of reasons: to extend the number of tales in a collection; to update the language of existing editions; to publish an edition with both a freshly translated text and a new set of new illustrations; or to revisit the source text in the production of a scholarly version for the academic market. Two twentieth-century translations of Grimms' tales into English indicate the polarization that may occur between new translations with respect to their intended audience and purpose. Artist Wanda Gág's memory of listening to Grimms' tales in German as a child inspired an illustrated, modernized edition of selected tales published in 1936 as *Tales from Grimm. Freely translated and illustrated by Wanda Gág*. That use of "freely" in her title signals Gág's intention, elaborated in her preface, to translate – but also to adapt – the Grimms' tales in the interests of child readers under the age of 12. Conversely, Jack Zipes' composed his new translation of *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (1987) for interested adults who would appreciate his endeavor "to respect the historical character and idioms of each tale and to retain a nineteenth-century flavour" (Grimm 1987: xxxvii). Even when translators work directly from a German source text to produce a new rendering, divergent purposes may result in differences in the selection of tales as well as in textual content.

A retranslation often incorporates familiar phrases from earlier editions, and only comprehensive comparative analysis will disclose the degree to which a translator has adopted sections of previous translations. A related occurrence in the history of the European fairy tale is the composition of hybrid versions of specific tales; Karen Seago's study of 13 translations of the Grimms' "Dornröschen" published between 1823 and 1888 reveals how translators integrate elements of Perrault's "La belle au bois dormant" into their English versions as the century progresses (Seago 2006). A complex textual history of this kind underpins many English versions of fairy tales from the European continent, proving once again that it is always important, certainly before any scholarly analysis is undertaken, to assess the provenance of a translation.

RELAY TRANSLATION

In addition to its success in the English-speaking world, Edgar Taylor's first translation of Grimms' tales served as a basis for translations of the tales into other languages. The first French rendering of Grimms' tales of 1824 is "an almost literal translation of Edgar Taylor's *German Popular Stories*" and includes copies of Cruikshank's engravings (François 2014: 181). Indian children's author Harikrishna Devsare confirms his debt, and that of many other translators of the tales into languages of the Indian sub-continent, to English versions including that of Taylor, to whom he devotes an essay to accompany his *Grimm Bandhoun Ki Kahaniyan* published in 2000 (Roy 2014: 139). These cases of the use of Taylor's version of Grimms' tales as a source text indicate that translation via one, or sometimes two, intermediary languages is a hidden but significant aspect of the international travels of fairy tales.

Relay translation occurs in a variety of contexts: where a source text is difficult to obtain, as in the case of Galland's Arabic texts that became the *Arabian Nights*; where knowledge of the source language is rare in the target culture (in India knowledge of English, the language of the former colonial power, is far more widespread than knowledge of German, the language of Grimms' tales); where a translation becomes so successful that it becomes the source of translations into other languages, or where texts are translated into minority languages via a lingua franca. Translation scholar Cay Dollerup claims that because fairy tales are popular and frequently republished, they offer "a picture in miniature of relay" (Dollerup 2000: 21). Translation patterns range from the imperial – in addition to their entry into Indian culture via English, Grimms' tales reached Korea via the language of the colonizer, Japan (Zur 2014) – to the commercial: a financially successful 24 volume edition of fairy tales in Italian became the source for a comparable Spanish-language version published in Columbia (Michaelis-Vultorius 2014).

The pathway of a translation through one or more intermediary languages is often unacknowledged and obscured, however, so that dedicated scholarly detective work is necessary to uncover the origins of written versions. In his painstaking analysis of English translations of Hans Christian Andersen's *Kunstmärchen*, Hjørnager Pedersen (2004) asserts that at least one, and possibly two, of the three first English translations, all published in 1846, used the German version by Georg Friedrich von Jenssen as a source text (see also Dollerup 1999). A frequently cited example of the possible pitfalls of relay translation is the increase by Jenssen in "The Princess and

the Pea” of the number of peas placed under the mattress to three to make the story more credible, a figure copied in two of the first English translations (Hjørnager Pedersen 2004: 94). By the nineteenth century, German had become on occasion an intermediary language for the translation of Scandinavian languages – particularly Swedish – into English, partly because the Nordic languages were less well known, and partly because German translations of Nordic texts were readily accessible at a time when translation of German fiction into English was in the ascendant. Sir George Webbe Dasent’s influential translation directly from Norwegian of folk tales collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe (*Popular Tales from the Norse*, 1859) indicates that relay translation was by no means the only route for tales from Scandinavia, but it was at times a pragmatic one for publishers.

Relay translation has also been essential historically to English-language publishing houses seeking to publish tales from continents beyond Europe. A glance at the contents pages of Andrew Lang’s fairy books reveals the extent to which readily accessible French and German translations of tales from across the world are the source of English versions compiled by his team of (largely female) translators: *The Pink Fairy Book* (1897) includes Sicilian, Japanese, Greek, Albanian and Danish (Andersen) tales translated into English via German, as well as Slavic and African tales rendered into English via French editions. Recently, British children’s author Elizabeth Laird has also employed a form of relay translation, albeit from spoken rather than written sources, in producing English versions of tales in the languages of the 14 regions of Ethiopia and Somalia across which she travelled. Laird’s procedure in collecting tales offers some insights into the manner in which tales may have travelled across languages in the past. In parts of Ethiopia a local collector translated from tape recordings of storytelling sessions in the languages of Afar and Anuak into Amharic, which in turn was translated into English and dictated to Laird. Originally commissioned by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and the British Council as reading material for pupils in Ethiopia learning English, these tales have been published as *The Ogress and the Snake and other Stories from Somalia* (2009) and *The Lure of the Honeybird: The Storytellers of Ethiopia* (2013). Relay translation may seem to be an imperfect tool for the interlingual transmission of tales, but it does facilitate the distribution of stories from languages that are otherwise inaccessible, just as translation into minority languages via a lingua franca allows readers access to a range of fairy-tale traditions.

CONCLUSIONS

To pick up a collection of fairy tales or a picture book edition of an individual tale in a bookshop is on the whole to view a text that will be credited, if at all, to a rewriter. Retellings, adaptations and hybrid tales now dominate a market tailored to meet the unceasing demand for new publications. Moreover, feminist, alternative and parodic versions of fairy tales that lie at the far end of the spectrum between literal translation and adaptation are now also translated between languages; thus the fairy tale follows its eternal pattern of evolution. It should not be forgotten, however, that each new version rests at some stage in the past on the work of one or multiple translators. Although, as George Steiner lamented in *After Babel*: “the great mass of translation has left no records” (Steiner 1975: 274), the words of translators live on – even

in retellings – in isolated phrases or the names of characters (Samber’s “Cinderilla” certainly stuck), as indeed does the impact of their work on the formation of the modern fairy tale and its association with child readers. Antoine Galland, Robert Samber, Edgar Taylor, Wanda Gág and all the translators cited in this chapter stand as representatives of the many forgotten hands across the globe whose linguistic and literary talents have shaped the multifaceted development of the fairy tale.

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PART II

AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN





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CHAPTER EIGHT

FAIRY TALE IN AFRICA

A contrast of centuries

Ruth Finnegan

Are there fairy tales in Africa? Everywhere else perhaps, at least in the Western world, we find fairy tales. But not in Africa. Not, certainly, if fairy tales are, as in our accepted definition, a form of fiction that typically features figures from the European fantasy tradition such as elves, trolls and dragons, European style royal families, and a narrative structure that propels the protagonist from destitution to happiness.

Like just about every other statement that can be made about the African continent, however, this is a simplification. It is true enough that there are no tales with fairies, frogs or elves and shoemakers. No midnight pumpkins. No beings called trolls, no princes or princesses, no long hair let down from towers, gold or silver birch trees, magic wands, Nordic gods or German landscapes. Nor as in (most) fairy tales are there happy endings of the ‘they married and lived happily ever after’ variety. In all these senses, there are no fairy tales in Africa, or not until the more literary effervescence of recent times.

And yet, if we look at the nineteenth-century collections, are there not narratives with magical themes and characters, animals presenting (as the Greeks did through the masks of classic drama) the face of humans in satiric comment and wisdom? And adventure, love, the beginning of things. There are twins and triplets too with their magical powers, a favorite African narrative motif, alongside horrible witches and terrifying ogres, young men in search of love or manhood, maidens carried off by beasts disguised as humans, magical revealments and actions. In these respects, Africa certainly possesses the kind of tales that could equally be termed *Märchen* – house tales, folktales, traditional narratives, oral tradition, myths – indeed ‘fairy tales-without-fairies’ – many of them with parallels to the fairy tales gathered together in Europe in the nineteenth century. There are narratives structured and controlled, with repetitive episodes like those described by Vladimir Propp (2015 [1928]) or exemplifying the famous Aarne-Thompson themes and motifs. Fables too are represented, under that very label, about characterful animals that recall Aesop, Vishu Sarma and La Fontaine. And many of the early collections, as now too, use words that have long been at least near-synonyms of fairy tale – myths, folk tales, fables.

Early but isolated studies of African oral literatures include Jacques-François Roger’s retelling of Wolof fables from Senegal (1828), and some awareness of Arabic

fairy-tale material in Northern Africa. But until the mid-century there was no available evidence to refute the popular European image of Africa as totally without literary pretensions, notable only, if for anything, for the telling and retelling, without change, of 'tribal tradition' from (the resounding and oft-repeated expression) 'time immemorial.' As Richard Burton, criticizing, put it: "[t]he savage custom of going naked', we are told, 'has denuded the mind, and destroyed all decorum in the language. Poetry there is none ... There is no metre, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings, or arrests the passions'" (Burton 1865: xii). Such attitudes, prevalent in the nineteenth century, reflect assumptions then current in the European study of 'Folk-Lore' about the benighted and uncivilized 'folk.' Africans were fitted within the same scale.

By about the 1850s, however, the position changed. African languages had, largely through the efforts of pioneering missionaries, become a specialist field, which in turn fed into, and out of, the then burgeoning study of comparative philology and mythology. In time, this led to a fuller appreciation of the subtleties of African languages. And what better basis for the grammatical analysis of African languages than to set down, from dictation, both short proverbs and long narratives of flowing words, non-secret matter which narrators, often schoolchildren, were prepared to come up with? Collections of this kind, all with their *de rigueur* linguistic apparatuses, had become acceptable, even fashionable, published of course in the missionaries' respective 'mother countries.' One example is the mid-century collection *African Native Literature* (1854) by the German missionary Sigismund Koelle, the objective of which, according to the modest preface, was to introduce "to the friends of Africa" the language and grammar of the Kanuri people of Sierra Leone with whom Koelle had worked as a missionary for five years between 1847 and 1852. Another later nineteenth century collection of importance is the Swiss missionary Heli Chatelain's expansive parallel translation of Kimbundu narrative traditions: *Folk-tales of Angola* (1894).

The stories in these collections are strikingly different in style and format from more modern presentations of narrative tradition: there are no paragraph divisions (given the linguistic rather than literary aim they were not deemed necessary), the vocabulary used derives from Victorian renderings of the Bible, Homer and other ancient classics, and translations are overly literal, which inevitably shows the scintillating drama of the story performance in a poor light. The translations also obscure the dynamic and performative character of the narratives on which they are based, which must have strengthened the contemporary inclination to think of African narrative as a poor and 'primitive' effusion. Unlike many other collectors of the time, however, Koelle and Chatelain were engaged in a sincere endeavor to allow African informants to, in Koelle's words, "express their own thoughts in their own mother tongue" (1854: vi); they also sought to use the narratives they collected to contest polarizing racist discourses that were dominant at the time of writing. Koelle, for instance, attributes to his collection the supplementary objective of "refuting the old-fashioned doctrine" current "not only in America but also in Europe" of "an essential inequality" of Africans and "the rest of mankind" (1854: vii).

However, the tendency of nineteenth-century approaches to claim African *Märchen*, allegedly 'unknown' before, for Europe, the place then taken as the only 'real' home of knowledge, comes out clearly when such collections are contrasted with modern

approaches. Take for instance the more modern treatment of three different ‘texts’ of the age-old story of the origin of death among mortals (see Abrahamsson 1951). The source of interest in these stories for many contemporary scholars is no longer the tale’s travels, origins or linguistic features. Rather, contemporary scholars have tended to focus upon the way the story is actively told, and told differently, by individual storytellers, exhibiting different performance skills, different lives, different personal experiences. In this case, three different stories are presented (see the contrasting texts in Finnegan 1967: 233–5) and, building on the now widespread ‘performance studies’ approach (Schechner 2006), it is possible to show how the distinctive features of each tale and its teller are at the forefront. Contemporary modes of translation and presentation, moreover, facilitate an accurate and appealing mediation of the traditions: stories no longer appear in drab covers, freighted with linguistic analysis; they are presented with their vivid popular language intact. Stories are also increasingly available in audio and video presentations, as is the case with the narratives collected together and made available online by the World Oral Literature Project (www.oralliterature.org).

Nineteenth-century, even sometimes more recent, views of Africa suggest that the ‘lore’ of the continent is unchangeable, handed down in fixed, passive, ‘tribal’ form over the centuries or millennia – ‘tradition’ rather than ‘art.’ But the common nineteenth-century picture of a strict adherence to ‘traditional’ and unchanging themes, applied of course in a European as well as African context, is false. Not only do tales, early or modern, commonly have references to obviously recent material – like guns, money, books, lorries, horse-racing, new buildings – but the whole plot of a story can center around such things. A story of the Limba, for example, includes an imaginary race to the Secretariat building in a twentieth-century colonial capital to gain government recognition for an official position; a Thonga tale tells of a man going off to get work in Johannesburg and leaving his wife to get into trouble at home; or, again, a Nigerian narrative recounts the story of a young hero winning the football pools (Finnegan 2012: 376). Then as now, the occupations and pre-occupations of both present and past, the background of local and changing literary conventions, and the current interests of both teller and listeners, can provide matter on which gifted narrators can draw to delight their audiences. Now we can see the skilled artistry, inspiration, individual originality, of the performers at work – features that were generally of little interest to earlier collectors.

So it may indeed have been language and perceptions of the ‘primitive’ back-to-nature quality of African life and artefacts that attracted European collectors in the nineteenth century. Then, and later, the successive theoretical waves of evolutionism, diffusionism, functionalism, successfully blinded us to other aspects of the narratives. But those tales still, in A. S. Byatt’s words, give us “the stuff of daydreams and self-discovery” (2012: xxvii), the ability and right to subvert in hidden, powerful, ways (Zipes 2011) or, with Tolkien (1966), the assurance of an eventual happy ending. Yes, these tales of wonder and fantasy – these ‘fairy tales’ – still fascinate. To some they offer tantalizing glimpses of other worlds, to others a subversive counterpoint to human arrogance and weakness, the thrill and delight of the world of fairies. From every period and every country, poets and storytellers have described a magical world inhabited by elfin spirits. Capricious and vengeful, or beautiful and generous, they’ve held us in thrall for generations.

By now, thankfully, it is no longer a matter of Europe claiming African knowledge or of Africa being presented as the benighted continent to which Europe brought salvation, letters and enlightenment, but of Africa reclaiming its own – its myths, its insights and its fairy tales – and publishing them to the world.

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CHAPTER NINE

NARRATIVES OF THE SOUTHWEST
INDIAN OCEAN

Commonalities and localizations

Lee Haring

We know now that a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single “theological” meaning (the “message” of the Author-God), but of a multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original: the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture.
(Barthes 1986: 52–3)

Only in the peasant Europe of the imagination of old-time folktale scholars do folk and fairy tales constitute a stable repertoire. Out of the recurrence of favorite types and motifs in a geographical region, I can posit a common stock (Haring 2007), but these narratives are subject to continual alteration through transmission, or in Charles Briggs’s terms *mobility* and *circulation* (Briggs 2013). What we now call “global flows” across the Indian Ocean have mobilized and circulated stories from

the Arabo-Persian complex (and beyond it the Mediterranean); Aryan and Dravidian India; Ceylon, Indonesia ... Malayo-Polynesian tradition ... then Hindu and Buddhist ... and Muslim thereafter. All this saying nothing of the African migrations reaching the Comoros and the whole of the south and west of Madagascar.
(Ottino 1974: 5)

These diverse imported elements combine and blend to recall ancient images and produce new, unpredictable narratives; in many of these, oppressed people use verbal art to critique power relations.

The movement of peoples into and around the region effects mixings of languages. If, as creole linguists declare, language-mixing lies in the history of all languages, then mixing and culture contact must underlie verbal art as much as they do ordinary talk. The tales circulated to Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion, the Comoros, and Seychelles – “Cinderella,” “Bluebeard,” and “The Smith Outwits the Devil” from Europe; Tarbaby, the deceptive tug-of-war, the deceptive agreement to kill mothers from Africa; “Sobur” and “The Animal Languages” from India – are adapted and recreated. Mixing and hybridizing occur in the texts and texture of stories. Narrative genres are mixed with one another; non-narrative genres are incorporated; tale character types are combined;

diverse ways of speaking are put in the mouths of tale characters; singing and verse are heard. Members of the audience retain freedom to interpret the behavior of tale characters for themselves. The history of cultural convergence has determined that this region's versions of international tale types are elements in a novel Literary Mode of Production (LMP) (Eagleton 1978: 45–8), which carries a double consciousness, of past associations and present pressures. The new LMP exemplifies *creolization*, a concept that returns agency to the colonized and powerless. Necessary conditions were the convergence of different languages and traditions and a strong differentiation of power.

CODES AND GRAMMARS CONVERGE

Because African history is dominated by the attempts of languages and cultures to coexist, a capacity for mixing and blending, whether in ordinary talk or verbal art, exists all over the continent. It is an objective condition for creolization in the islands too. Take Mayotte for example, an island of 144 square miles, the poorest of the overseas *départements* of France, long a neglected colony. Language in Mayotte is a lively microcosm of multiculturalism. Most folktales collected there are told in *kibushi*, the Mayotte version of Malagasy, the language of the Great Red Island, 210 miles away. People in the next village over have a second language, *shimaore*, honored as indigenous. As to French (which is called *shizungu* in *shimaore* and *kivazaha* in *kibushi*), Mahorais are not eager to speak the language of the metropole, but the storytellers do practice language-mixing. Often in a tale, a person is recognized or identified through a song in a different language, or the teller will drop lines in *shimaore* into a tale in *kibushi*, especially in the songs. The verbal art enacts the island's cultural mixing. Or take Mauritius, a key player in the region's history. There, the word *Kreol* is the name of the one language everybody speaks, but the word also denotes the descendants of African slaves, who make up one-quarter of the population and perform African-derived tales. After abolition, they populated the island of Rodrigues, 385 miles away. Though it is more homogeneous than multicultural Mauritius, Rodrigues has its own style of accordion playing to accompany the dances their ancestors learned from France.

A particularly useful technique of creolization in narrative is to blend genres with a satiric purpose. In two stories from the French overseas *département* of Réunion, narrators use the boastful fly-killer character, familiar from the tale of “The Brave Tailor” (ATU 1640), to introduce other plots. One leads from the happy ending of the wedding into a comic tale type, the “Bargain Not to Become Angry” (ATU 1000) (Decros 1978: 149–59); the other attaches the fly-killer to a tale in which the clever lad Ti Zan, to win the girl, has only to defeat the ogre Gran Dyab. When the king assigns him a suitor task (H335), Ti Zan demands the contract in writing (motif P525); then it turns out he can't write. “Wet your thumb in this ink and put it there,” says the king. That, the narrator points out in a parody of myth style, was the beginning of signing with your thumb. Gran Dyab is captured (motif G514) and tricked into carrying Ti Zan to the palace on his back (motif G561), then runs to the seaside and disappears into the waves – another victory of the powerless (Carayol 1980: 19–21). Such use of trickster tales to celebrate the superiority of wit attests to African influence, as processed by creole narrative grammar.

Doubtless localization is a folklore universal; why else would you hang on to a story? Tellers of legend and folktale have always hauled in names or objects that

were familiar to their hearers, like the axe, needle, haycart, and goat that feature in a Mauritian version of the tale “What Should I Have Done?” (ATU 1696). Ti Zan in the story continually and hilariously applies the last advice his mother gave him; the narrator makes it a cumulative tale, so that Ti Zan can make a final plea.

Blacksmith, blacksmith, I don't know anything about this. Give me my paper back, paper I got from the pupil, pupil who took my pen, pen I got from the pigeon, pigeon which took my lentils, lentils I got from a woman, woman who took my coconut away, coconut I got from my mother, mother who took my sling away, sling I got from my father, father who took my grass-hopper away, grass-hopper I got in play.

Finally he tricks the king into giving him a cow (Baissac 1989: 50–5). The numbskull has become the clever lad, thus combining two genres of character and plot.

In the same satiric vein, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Réunion all know the humorous tale in which “The Smith Outwits the Devil” (ATU 330). Predictably for an overseas *département* like la Réunion, the version told there shows strong European influence: God, Saint Peter, and Death all come onstage (Haring 2007: 254–61; Delarue 1957: 1:346). Réunion also knows the localization of a worldwide plot like “The Three Stolen Princesses” (ATU 301). Narrator Daniel Fontaine deftly transforms the underworld, where the hero finds his beloved, to his home terrain of Salazie, one of Réunion's (indeed the world's) most spectacular places, as the location of the crater where the hero spends too much of his time (Haring 2007: 291–7). In most stories, “normal” localization means locating the action by using local place names, pointing to a tree like one in the story, or comparing a magical light to a Petromax pressure lamp (Gueunier 1990: 311).

The process of cultural mixing and blending called creolization has negotiated cultural differences from the beginning of this region's history. But, of course, mixing and blending in narrative are not new. They are found in the folktales of classical antiquity (Hansen 2002). The South Sea islanders observed by Bronislaw Malinowski mixed tales and genres; so did the writers of the European Middle Ages and Renaissance (Malinowski 1961; Seznec 1953). The French folklorist Pierre Saintyves, who is hardly read nowadays, argued that the veneration of Christian saints was a continuation of pre-Christian worship of the dead (Saintyves 1907). To take in the social setting, however, creolization theory has had to pass beyond its predecessor terms. Words like mongrelization, *mestizaje*, pastiche, *bricolage*, *mélange*, fusion, and syncretism were all ineffectual, condescending attempts to cope with sociocultural change (Spitzer 2011; Szwed 2011). A word like *hybridity*, with its heavy implication of impurity, is a loaded analytic tool, rather than a phenomenon observable in the field. *Creolization* means the renegotiation of culture at points of cultural contact: either the interplay between cultural centers and their periphery, or the selection and refashioning by subordinate groups of products from a dominant culture (for these two contrasting views see Hannerz 1987: 546–59 and Baron and Cara: 2011). Insights from the renegotiation are central to understanding how an oral-literary canon is formed and how narratives are mobilized and circulated.

Rearranging narrative materials is at the heart of creolization in this region. Thereby complexities are negotiated. Stories in which unpromising human characters

defeat an ogre and take over his house – a familiar enough pattern in Europe – are numerous. In Charles Baissac's Mauritian version, the seven characters are led by the unpromising youngest son (Baissac 1888: 192–215). A Seychellois version uses only two African characters and blends in an Indian motif: the older brother is blind and the younger is a hunchback (Carayol and Chaudenson 1979: 141–6) (motif N886.1, Hunchback leads blind man). Like its Nyanja (East African) counterpart, the Seychellois tale ends as the blind and deaf brothers cure each other by blows on the head (N642.1). Equally visible is the blending in the two 1976 performances of defeating an ogre by the great Réunionnais narrator, Gérose Barivoitse. There, the youngest of three brothers is a hunchback, in a reminiscence of Madagascar, where it is often a deformed hero who wins new appearance and fortune (Barat, Carayol, and Vogel 1977: 39–42). Whatever their disadvantage, these unpromising persons arrive at an ogre's house after acquiring some seemingly useless objects. These enable them to defeat the ogre, just as in other traditions, objects more obviously magical enable the hero to defeat enemies and win the girl. In the climactic episode of the Réunion versions, the ogre is made to believe that his small opponent is a champion at urinating, defecating, and yelling (K1711). The Mauritian version expands the contest to include a challenge as to which has the biggest stomach, head, breasts, and tail; the little hero wins every time, unassisted by his six brothers or seven female cousins.

These texts constitute something larger than a recurrent plot. The pattern of arrival at the ogre's house, deceiving the ogre, and escape serves as the skeleton for many Malagasy tales; it is less a plot than a structural frame to enclose several distinct incidents. Reminiscent though it be of European types like "The Animals in Night Quarters" (ATU 130), "The Wolf Flees from the Wolf-Head" (ATU 125), or "Rooster, Hen, Duck, Pin, and Needle on a Journey" (ATU 210), it differs from them in locally significant ways. For one, the characters opposed to the ogre are human, not animal. For another, none of the elements scholars have considered essential to define any of those three types appears in the tale. They share only one motif: animals hidden in various parts of a house attack the owner with their characteristic powers and kill him (K1161). But regionally, that motif is transformed into something rich, strange, and parodic – a contest in farting and urinating that would never have been tolerated by Wilhelm Grimm. What was European and African in this tale type has been adapted to the preferences of the immigrating populations and made into a symbolic victory over authority. In one terminology, that adaptation is called *oikotypification*, an *oikotype* being "the distinct form in which a folktale (or other item of oral poetry) appeared among a particular people, bearing the stamp of the natural and cultural conditions peculiar to them" (Berg 1971: 184). In my terminology, remembering the intense heat generated by the slavery and forced immigration imposed on the islands, the adaptation is called *creolization*.

FORMAL CRITICISM AND HISTORY

Insight into the mixing and blending of tales in creole societies comes from studying the texts formally. The formal criticism of folktales has had its rises and falls in scholarly esteem, as much as any work of art has. For comparison: one can hardly think of a more popular piece of European music than Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto, in B Flat Minor. The great pianist Nikolai Grigoryevich Rubinstein, who was first to

see it, called it unplayable. Fortunately for the thin-skinned Tchaikovsky, the equally eminent Hans von Bülow found the concerto to be a veritable jewel and made it part of his repertoire (Wiley 2009: 89–90). How many pianists or audiences have been attracted to the composer's second concerto, of six years later – or have even heard it? Few indeed. In a parallel bit of history from the smaller world of folktale study, one can hardly find a more acclaimed piece of narrative study than the 1928 book by V.I. Propp known as *Morphology of the Folktale* (Propp 1968). His formalist study conceives the folktale text as American New Critics conceived the poem: “a self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations; [Propp's formalism] sets out to judge [the folktale] solely by criteria intrinsic to its own mode of being” (Abrams 1972: 21). The morphological study of folktales offers rigor, but (as Terry Eagleton says of structuralism) it is “hair-raisingly unhistorical” (Eagleton 1983: 109). Oriented towards the analysis of texts, Propp wants nothing to do with performances or live storytellers. Conclusively he demonstrates that if he is allowed to describe the moves in tales abstractly, with words like Absentation or Struggle, then it follows that: (1) only a limited number of things happen in folktales; (2) these things always occur in a certain order; and (3) they are linked one to another. That is, if a despised daughter is rejected by her parents, they will eventually be reconciled; if some messengers fail, another will finally succeed. To the critic, formalist analysis offers terms for analyzing not only folktales but films, *bandes dessinées* (graphic novels), and other narrative forms. But Propp always knew that isolating the wonder tale from history was a bad idea; for him, the *Morphology* was only Part One of two. Hence, to explain the genesis of this “category” of narrative (which he refused to call a genre), he reintegrated the wonder tale into history under a materialist-evolutionary vision (Propp 1984: 100–23). Because that Marxist view of history is in such bad repute, few folklorists or historians accept his vision, and the *Historical Roots of the Wondertale* has become Propp's second piano concerto.

His challenge to the study of narrative however, remains. Propp believed he had investigated the historical conditions of possibility for a specific form to be created. Fredric Jameson (whose words I adapt (Jameson 1991: 298)), in his ongoing series *The Poetics of Social Forms*, uncovers with stunning comprehensiveness the historical conditions for most of European fiction and film, and demonstrates how they speak from those conditions. Could the same investigation be done for the “creole folktale,” if there is such a thing? It appears, for example, that the capacity for switching between languages and mixing narrative genres is greatly enhanced by the convergence, sometimes the clash, of cultures. In the Caribbean, one observer finds “double-voiced and double-visioned associations” which register and respond to multiple planes of expressive activity within the same performance.

Double vision, therefore, not only implies a capacity to see multiple planes of existence and how they relate or conflict with one another; it also lays claim to deep knowledge, initiates' knowledge, whether of religious matters or the secular concerns of a self-aware, self-defined community.

(Gundaker 1998: 25)

This capacity is widespread among African-derived peoples; the Indian Ocean islands have acquired and intensified it. The result for folktale is what novelist Salman

Rushdie proclaims for the novel: “hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure” (Rushdie 1991: 394).

Logically it would follow that in creolization, the narrative grammar might produce new and unexpected combinations. Maybe the Proppian “success story” pattern could turn up in a quite unrelated plot. And so it does, in a Comoran version of the most popular of all African tales, the *fille difficile*, or defiant maid, who must be rescued from her hasty marriage to a wolf-man or other monster (K1918, Monster disguises and wins girl). In this story, a young man, Mady, vows to capture the monster and marry the girl, thus voicing the “lack” that initiates Propp’s pattern. The pattern then blends into the *fille difficile* plot, combining the rescue theme with Mady’s success story. He leaves home (Propp’s Departure), journeys for five years, and reaches a rock which opens when he speaks a charm. An old woman is revealed (G512.2, Spirit woman in rock), covered in *jaby* (mud? feces?). Will he bathe her? That is his test. Mady responds to the test kindly (the hero’s reaction), and she rewards him with advice about getting a magic object, a drum that enables him to successfully complete the quest for a wife demanded by Propp’s pattern. But the tale is a lot more complicated than that: Mady displays trickster traits, and at one point he acquires a cap of invisibility, for all the world like the young hero of “The Danced-Out Shoes” (ATU 306) (Gueunier and Saïd 2011: 180–204). Is that what Rushdie means by mongrelization? Creole narrative grammar takes as its elements “whatever is at hand,” conforming to the *bricolage* expounded by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966: 17–20). Once “whatever is at hand” is assembled into an utterance, the criterion of its meaning is its relevance to people’s ongoing concerns. As Adorno said of poetic language, the creole narrative is “anything but a vehicle; rather, it is a configuration in which communicative language transcends its pragmatic function in order to articulate the tension between the subject and the objectified world” (Hohendahl 1995: 110).

POWER DIFFERENTIATION

The Southwest Indian Ocean, where every island has its own creole language, and where diverse groups have been brought together by coercion, is a laboratory for understanding linguistic and cultural creolization. Narratives there illustrate Caroline Levine’s trenchant observation:

literary forms have a power quite different from the one they have traditionally been assigned – not the power to unify and contain like an urn, but rather a power ... to set forms against one another in disruptive and aleatory as well as rigidly containing ways.

(Levine 2015, 40)

Thus, the creole Literary Mode of Production allegorizes the convergence and conflicts among hierarchies.

King and subject represent one traditional hierarchy. Both Madagascar and Mauritius know Ovid’s story of “Midas and the Donkey’s Ears” (ATU 782), in which the king tries to conceal his physical peculiarity. His antagonist, in the Malagasy version, is a

poor honey-gatherer who discovers his secret and tries vainly to keep it. He digs a hole and vomits into it. From that place a beautiful tree springs up, 60 yards high, with golden fruits; the king claims it and tries to make the tree descend, but his magic fails. After all the other people also try and fail, the honey-gatherer confesses the origin of the tree and the king's secret. The king faints from shame; the honey-gatherer brings him back to life with a magic charm. Yet the people still threaten the honey-gatherer until the king confesses his peculiarity. Then with magic powers the honey-gatherer causes the tree to bend down, enabling the people (not the king) to pluck the fruits, and stretch up again. The narrator ends, "That's why one shouldn't keep from speaking about what one has found, whether it's bad, shameful, or good" (Decary 1964: 109–13). This is unusual advice in a culture that cultivates secrecy, but as the editor received the text from a schoolboy, it may represent a bit of deference to the hierarchy of school ethics. In the Mauritian version, every time the king has his hair cut, he kills the barber to keep his secret. Finally, he spares one, with a warning; the barber tells the king's secret to a sandalwood tree and feels better immediately, but the sandalwood tree dies. Musical instruments made from its wood reveal the secret; in shame at having killed so many innocent barbers, the king throws off his turban, abasing himself. If king and subject represent one hierarchy, another is represented by the awarding of magic powers to the subject and the wood, rather than to the king. When hierarchies misalign, says Levine, "they are capable of generating more disorder than order" (Levine 2015: 85). Creole narrative grammar holds both up for inspection.

Indian Ocean folktales (*kont*) use the complexities of converging social systems as both their code of available metaphor and the object of their commentaries. In Rodrigues, as in most places, "local storytellers can [and do] map their stories onto the geographical surround or fit their characters into a social or genealogical system" (Young 1987: 110). Speaking in Kreol, both the teller and hero of a Rodrigan version of "The Brave Tailor" (mentioned above) see the social system from the underside. As Soudin, an unemployed drunkard (stereotype of the Rodrigan as seen by an Indo-Mauritian), lies in a stupor by the side of the road one day, three hoodlums pass by. One says, "Let's kill him." Another says, "No, let's take a pencil and write on his shirt, 'Soudin with one pistol shot kills 500,000 men'" (Carayol Chaudenson 1979: 107). Later in battle, after Soudin intimidates the enemy soldiers with his boasting (motif K1951.3), he takes their flag to his king as the token of victory. "Bravo," says the king. "I offer you half my fortune, I entrust the government of half the country to you, and I give you my daughter in marriage." "But I don't want to marry," Soudin says. "No," says the king, "I have only one word. You have to marry" (109). Soudin complies and takes the girl home. The wedding rounds off the Brave Tailor segment, but in three ensuing trickster episodes, Soudin passively accepts tasks the king imposes on him, transforming the boastfulness displayed by the tailor in other versions of this tale type into a characteristic of the underdog. He manages to lasso a ravaging wolf, but when commanded to kill it too, he makes an absurd boast: he will shoot a bullet into its right ear which will come out the left. The narrator doesn't know how he brings off this exploit, so he doesn't know either, but he inexplicably succeeds. Then in another episode of absurd success, he frightens off another wolf by saying "It's raining!" A third wolf he knocks out by dropping a bit of whalebone on it. Boastfulness returns when he offers the wolf's tongue to the king, a parody of the dragon-tongue proof found in tales like "The Dragon-Slayer" (motif H105.1, type

ATU 300) (Carayol and Chaudenson 1979: 115–17). An audience sees powerlessness and power lying side-by-side with Soudin in the ditch. Experts from metropolitan France, by the way, find that Soudin’s powerless attitude undermines many a development scheme in these islands. Caroline Levine’s analysis embraces the conflict, “understanding each form to have its own logic.” Her question about “what happens to these hierarchies when they run into one another” gets its answer in the language of narrative (Levine 2015: 90).

Maintaining the underdog point of view, a Mauritian story about an unpromising hero is apparently a new creation under slavery. Published in the classic 1888 collection by an editor who was himself a creole (i.e. of mixed ethnicity), the tale makes parodic use of its two mythic motifs. A serious environmental concern is voiced by the vital interests of the king’s subjects. The king in the story has many trees and cattle and much money, but his pond hasn’t a drop of water. He sends the horse as messenger (B291) to grandmother spider, who tells him “Tell the king to cut down all the resin-trees and the water will flow” (B154, Oracular animal). On the way, the horse wounds his foot on a *tamanikok* tree, which causes him to forget which tree the spider named; he tells the king to cut down all the *tamanikok* (K981, Fatal deception: changed message from oracle). All these trees are cut down, but no water flows into the pond. As a second messenger the king sends the cow to spider, who repeats what she said to the horse. On the way, the cow gets hungry and eats some ebony tree leaves. These are so bitter that she forgets which tree the spider named, and tells the king to cut down all the ebony trees. All these trees are cut down, but no water flows into the pond. Hare volunteers to be the third messenger; testily, spider repeats what she said to the horse and cow. On the way, hare is chased by a hunter and has to stop for three days; he forgets which tree the spider named and tells the king to cut down all the Indian almond trees. These trees too are cut down, but no water flows into the pond. Now tortoise volunteers as messenger, but spider, out of all patience, says, “[p]ut palm wine in it for all I care!” But when tortoise speaks gently to her, she finally repeats, “[c]ut down the resin trees.” On tortoise’s return, months later of course because his pace hasn’t changed, the king thinks that cutting the resin trees must be a joke, but he is willing to try. All the resin trees are cut down, and water finally flows into the pond (L160, Success of the unpromising hero). The king gives a big feast, at which he drinks wine and liquor. In case you thought the water supply was being restored, the narrator adds, “*Cette eau-là c’est pour le bain,*” the pond water is for bathing (Baissac 1888: 24). The myth motifs being parodied, for the sake of satirizing this unjust ruler, are the origin of death from a falsified message and the release of impounded water (A1335.1, A1111). Combining them with tortoise as the unpromising hero suggests that parodic discourse was already available to African immigrants to the Indian Ocean islands, as a way to play out the contradiction between the egalitarian and hierarchical tendencies in their society. This story is African enough, but it is a new island creation. The collector, Charles Baissac, didn’t know quite what to make of such pointed disapproval.

THE LMP

If there is such a thing as a creole narrative grammar, it must have rules, analogous to the rules for determining a creole language (Polomé 1982: 276–7), but the rules

may seem irregular. Creolization requires a convergence of different languages and traditions and a strong differentiation of power. Does it also require, or produce, a dialogue between genres of narrative? The theoretical problem is well stated by John Dorst:

Bakhtin's sociohistorical poetics suggests that along with the ethnography that inquires into such matters as who owns what genres, when they are used, how they are perceived by those who use them, how they are marked, etc., we need a dialectics that considers the relationship between genres and the larger social forces at work in concrete historical circumstances.

(Dorst 1983: 425)

It is already known that Malagasy narrators withheld recitation of certain narratives in the *tantara* genre – sacred narratives or myths – to foreign investigators, as their response to the power differentiation (Haring 2003). Out of its attention to multiple convergences in a place like Mayotte or Réunion, creolization looks for intergeneric dialogue in which “genres engage one another in varying degrees of integration and exchange” (Dorst 1983: 416). As a creole language is created out of what people speaking different languages bring with them, so the dialogue of genres creates something new and unpredictable – a criterion for creolization.

In the linguistic realm, Anne Storch's recent book about African languages throws a bright light on the “deliberate manipulations of a language by its speakers. These manipulations are based and depend on cultural and social contexts; they are often—if not always—considered to be secret and are at the same time expressions of difference and power” (Storch 2011: 3). I suggest analogously that a differentiation of power is expressed in a deliberate and playful manipulation of narrative genre. For example, the genre of riddle can impose itself on the Comoran genre of *hale*, folktale, to create a narrative structure. In a playful riddle tale from Mayotte, Octopus meets the *hima*, shellfish, and asks, “How do you live?” The *hima* answers, “I eat by God's grace,” then cuts off one of the octopus's legs. “Why'd you do that?” “Well, that's how I eat by God's grace. That's how I eat: anyone passes by here, I eat them.” Unconvinced, the octopus turns again and loses a second leg. With that he departs, never to return (Gueunier and Saïd 2011: 488–9). The plot depicts play while itself being playful, in that performing the riddling dialogue mixes genres. In creole societies such playfulness is the rule.

As to *parody*, it is generally visible in Indian Ocean folklore in playful and non-playful modes. A great many narrators regularly parody the material they borrow, in the playful, ironic sort of parody, so familiar from the calypso songs of Lord Kitchener and the Mighty Sparrow. But parody is not always playful; it is often a case of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of double-voiced discourse, and in musicology it has one quite distinct meaning among others.

[I]n the 18th century “parody” was understood primarily as the fashioning of a new poem on the model of an extant one. It is now taken to mean the retexting of a vocal composition, and more generally the production of a new vocal work based on the music of another piece.

(Melamed 1999: 356)

Some tales collected in Mayotte are parodies that also mix genres. One string of trickster episodes ends with Bwanawasi the trickster marrying the princess and ascending the throne, as if he were a Proppian hero. To the external observer, that ending belongs to a pattern quite distinct from the trickster sort of plot, in which a trickster violates all the social rules and either does or does not get punished. Evidently to the narrator, the rule approves the mixing of genres, as one tool for reflecting and negotiating the complexities in the cultural history of the region.

The Southwest Indian Ocean LMP is in constant variation. But then, so is any system of literary production and consumption. Literary systems are defined not by homogeneity but by “a variability whose characteristics are immanent, continuous, and regulated in a very specific mode” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 93–4), namely by the effects of power differentiation. What if the various techniques of creolization – the mixing of prose and verse; the mixing of phonetic, morphemic, lexical, syntactical, and suprasegmental elements; the switching among codes and registers – are not errors, but the norms that govern the mobility and circulation of narratives in the world? What if critics decided to regard these various hybridizations as ‘normal,’ for written as well as oral literature? What if there is no universal or general abstract mechanism that produces verbal art, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari suggest? What if there are no “invariable or obligatory rules,” but instead, “abstract machines,” which consist of “optional rules that ceaselessly vary with the variation itself, as in a game in which each move changes the rules” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 100)? Then the study of marginality called creolization will have set up a model for a new literary criticism.

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CHAPTER TEN

FAIRY TALES AND FOLKLORE IN SOUTH AFRICA



Nadia van der Westhuizen

Anyone who knows the South African mountains will appreciate the perversity of imagining them peopled by European fairies.

(Jenkins 2002: 92)

EUROCENTRIC TRADITION

There is a rich tradition of folklore in South Africa which is able to tell us much about the traditions, beliefs and customs practiced by and passed among the South African people. South Africa's tumultuous political and social history has, however, shaped this tradition substantially. During the colonial era missionaries and colonial officials recorded many indigenous folktales, translating them into both English and Afrikaans, and adapting them to fit the format of the European fairy tales popular at the time. As Roger D. Abrahams argues, translated tales might have been "intended to be used either for learning the language of the subject people or for the enjoyment of an audience back home," but there was already an established practice when it came to presenting fairy tales, and collectors thus "adopted the literary style already shown to excite the common reader" (1983: xiv). However, as Elwyn Jenkins points out, "the parallel production of European-type fairy stories was much more prolific, and apparently conducted largely in ignorance of local traditional stories" (2002: 91). Both before and after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, white South Africans sought to create a sense of national identity with fairy tales "that drew on their European heritage but [which were] set in their own country" (Jenkins 2002: 89). Collections like Mrs E.J. Bourhill and Mrs J.B. Drake's *Fairy Tales from South Africa* (1908) read just like their European counterparts. Animal Bridegroom tales in the style of ATU 425, such as "The Serpent's Bride" (featuring a bewitched prince saved by a princess who shows no fear), sit alongside Supernatural Helper tales like "The Story of the Shining Princess" (in which a handsome prince must face several trials to rescue a beautiful princess abducted by cannibals). Despite the traditional African setting, and various 'Africanized' elements – for example, the magical helper in the latter story is a talking 'fairy ox' included in the lobola (cattle given as wedding tribute) – these stories are structured like European fairy tales. Such stories combine European staples with

a number of unique cultural indicators reflecting indigenous elements (and even on occasion use indigenous terminology), but they are still Eurocentric constructs which highlight that both English and Afrikaans-speaking whites “exercised an influence disproportionate to their numbers” whilst enjoying “political power at the expense of a disempowered black underclass” (Jenkins 2002: 89, 98).

Both ‘Africanized’ Eurocentric fairy tales and early translations of African tales have value as markers of the cultural development of the white South African people, but they are an inadequate reflection of the indigenous folklore of South Africa, and they perpetuate social, cultural and political divisions by exposing the fractured state of the country and its people. In attempting to construct indigenous legitimacy, these tales often exploit or even demonise others. It is, however, counterproductive to just criticize colonial writers and collectors for failing to represent the colonized. Rather, we must turn our attention to the attempts of contemporary storytellers and collectors who challenge the expropriation of indigenous voices, and who are working to reclaim, or give new voice to, traditional narratives.

INDIGENOUS SOUTH AFRICAN FOLKLORE

Indigenous South African folktales have traditionally been presented orally, and are couched in performances which include “a number of other kinds of expression for which Black Africa is known to Westerners, especially dancing and drumming” (Abrahams 1983: xiii-xiv). This performance-based “oral transmission of the literary tradition” is incredibly flexible and “susceptible to free improvisation, dramatization and revision, making it possible for each rendition, even of the same tale, to be excitingly new and unique” (Z.P. Jordan 1973: xvi). Tales fall into three broad categories: legendary tales (*amabali*), historical tales (*imilando*) and fantastic tales (*iintsomi*). The latter are what we focus on here because they contain elements (e.g. supernatural creatures, magic, etc.) which associate them with the types of stories we consider to be fairy tales, and because they are “considered primarily as a form of entertainment” (Z.P. Jordan 1973: xviii). According to Harold Scheub, a leading scholar in African oral traditions and folklore, *iintsomi* lack an “obviously moral and didactic framework,” but there is a ‘core-cliché’ (such as a chant or a song) within each performance “around which the narrative-plot is constructed,” and this is given “meaning in performance ... the core-cliché is actually a vehicle for the communication of those ideals deemed of current validity by the artist” (1973: 2-3). In other words, when it comes to South African folklore it’s all about the performer, and their performance: “the audience learn, not through an analytical examination of ideas, but through a total emotional and psychological involvement in the performance” (Scheub 1973: 2).

This presents a challenge to a literary scholar, for these tales defy standard analyses which assess the tropes and motifs of different variants of fairy tales. All oral folklore presents this difficulty, but *iintsomi* arguably more so because constant change is not only accepted as inevitable, but actually required – and celebrated. We therefore have to turn our focus away from a close critical analysis of each variant in comparison to others and look instead at the overall functionality of the South African tradition. This chapter thus aims to contextualize South African folklore not through textual analysis of individual stories but rather through an exploration of how the indigenous tradition is manifested in notable collections by three well-known authorities on the subject.

COLONIZATION AND ITS AFTERMATH

Colonial collectors were, of course, limited in their ability to accurately record performance-based folklore because the appropriate technology wasn't available to them. However, the stories which were collected also "often reflect the bias" of colonial reporters, who "set down these stories with other objectives than the understanding of a culture and the place of performance within it" (Abrahams 1983: xiv). Even though more objective tales are now available, it will take time and effort to redress the choices made during the past European campaign of "territorial annexation and forced acculturation," which severely undermined the indigenous South African community by excluding them "from access to the traditions that once shaped their societies" (Z.P. Jordan 1973: ix). Consequently, there is a significant effort by not only folklorists and other scholars, but African storytellers/artists themselves, to present tales which are a more authentic reflection of the indigenous customs and traditions of South Africa. Such stories can be seen as an effective mode of political practice, for they offer the disenfranchised the opportunity to preserve and reclaim their traditions and, in doing so, potentially restore an identity distorted by oppression.

There was, as Lindi Nelani Jordan points out, an "outpouring of writings on African literature, and other things African" in the period in which South Africa became independent (1973: vii). In terms of political and cultural transition this period was particularly significant, which is why this chapter primarily focuses on stories collected, and collections published, around this time. Whilst this literary deluge indicated an increasing detachment from "entrenched European colonialism," it nonetheless also facilitated a surplus of books – written mostly by American and European academics – which showed "only a superficial knowledge and understanding of Africa" (L.N. Jordan 1973: vii). The only way to redress the deficit is, according to L.N. Jordan, for "African scholars who know and understand the cultures and peoples" they are writing about to take on the mantle (1973: viii). This is why, he argues, literary historian and African Studies pioneer Archibald Campbell Mzolisa Jordan – a Xhosa writer and *iintsomi* performer – is able to get closer than most. In the years preceding the declaration of The Republic of South Africa (May 31, 1961), A.C. Jordan, along with other African contemporaries, "sought to redefine the African past and the present in the light of both the 'official' history and the oral African tradition" in order to "reassert a community with pride in itself and its past, but looking in the direction of 'modernization'" (Z.P. Jordan 1973: xxii). A.C. Jordan was exiled in 1961, moving to the USA where he continued to teach others about Xhosa culture and language:

Jordan ... chose the Southern African tale – with its oral tradition, and hence not limited to a reading public – as the medium through which to express his protest against the existing order. He sought to transform the tale into a great collective symbol around which the African people could be mobilized for social and political change.

(Z.P. Jordan 1973: xxii)

A.C. Jordan had, throughout his life, collected tales from rural areas and townships, and in 1973 some of these were published in *Tales from Southern Africa*. Containing ten tales with critical commentary by Scheub, and three short animal tales with no

commentary, this book tries to “recreate the collective interaction between teller and audience as far as possible [in order to add] to the authenticity of this collection” (Z.P. Jordan 1973: xxiii).

The book honors the performance tradition in several ways, including the addition of numerous songs and chants throughout. The importance of the central formulaic elements of these tales (which Scheub refers to as ‘core-clichés’) is highlighted: for example, in “The Woman and the Mighty Bird,” the protagonist’s singing marks each stage of her journey as she encounters a giant magical bird, makes a bargain with it, and is finally eaten by the bird for breaking her promise. Scheub’s adjoining commentary also emphasises this point: “in the *ntsomi* tradition, in a crisis, characters turn to song, the core-cliché that is the basic structure of the narrative’s surface movement, and the words of the song summarize her *plight*” (1973: 239; italics retained from source). As is also pointed out, “a basic aesthetic element of the *ntsomi* tradition is repetition,” and this is reflected in this particular story when “the repeated singing of the cliché moves the plot of the performance closer and closer to its climaz” (sic) (Scheub 1973: 3, 239). Songs and chants are repeated throughout the story but, as Scheub indicates, the meaning cannot be taken purely from the words, but also from the way the song is performed: the protagonist’s development “is reflected in the way she sings the song” (1973: 239). The tales are additionally loaded with onomatopoeia, and with phrases which emphasize the importance of a performative aspect. Many of the tales also contain chants and songs in Xhosa, which many readers of this book might be unfamiliar with (it would not be published in South Africa, where readers could be expected to have greater knowledge of indigenous languages, until 2004). Some of these have translations included, others not. We can therefore argue that whilst the tales have been adjusted in some ways to enhance their ‘readability’ that many of the aspects which indicate their tie to performance tradition are nonetheless retained.

The tales also notably reinforce indigenous tribal customs and practices. The precedent is set in the first tale in the collection, “The Turban”, in which the protagonist Nyengebule kills his *ntandanekezazi* (favorite wife) because she fails to follow tribal custom. After his crime is revealed by the singing of the broken wing of a magical bird, he is also put to death for his defiance of tribal custom. All the tales in this collection deal with custom and community, and strive to validate tribal existence. For example, in “The Maidens of Bhakubha” the protagonist Nomtha-we-Langa is severely punished for disrespecting tribal tradition by breaking *intonjane* (female purification rites) when she goes swimming in a forbidden magical pool and is cursed by a monster, and in “The Story of Nomxakazo” “a reverence for custom” is expressed through the protagonist’s acceptance – after a gruelling quest – that tribal traditions “are at once the rationale for and the foundation of humane activities” (Scheub 1973: 107).

Scheub argues that whilst Jordan’s stories are not truly *iintsomi* they nonetheless contain “many of the core-clichés” (1973: 12). Also, knowing that many readers would almost certainly “be far removed from the South African oral traditions,” it is understandable that Jordan would try to bridge the gap by adding “descriptive details of character and scene” which would not have featured in oral performances, as well as attempting “to explain and motivate all actions” (Scheub 1973: 12). Despite his best intentions, however, Jordan could not truly recreate an authentic traditional

experience – at least according to Scheub, who offers a somewhat different approach. Scheub's *South African Voices* "is a collection of oral performances of poems and national histories by various storytellers and artists [which] explore issues of particular relevance to national and regional struggle and survival e.g., the invasion and occupation by white Europeans" (Frazier 2006: vi–vii). Collected by Scheub between 1967–1976 – the height of the apartheid system in South Africa – these books (subsequently an online archive) include the recorded stories in the original indigenous language alongside a short English summation, as well as meticulous information on the narrator of each tale (including photographs and biographies), the place, date and time each was recorded, and even a note on audience composition. This is significant because, as Sadhana Naithani reminds us, colonial folklore collectors usually deemed it unnecessary "to mention the names of narrators, the place of narration and recording, and any sociological data about the narrators apart from the mention of their poverty" (2010: 40). According to Naithani, "[e]thical transgressions were the norm in colonial folkloristics" because collectors felt they had a right to the material; they "were not concerned with the real conditions of the narrative and performative practices" (Naithani 2010: 44). Also ethically problematic is the fact that, in distinction from European collectors such as the Grimms, colonial collectors were not "documenting ... their *own* heritage," but were rather "motivated by self-interest" (Naithani 2010: 44–5). As Naithani explains,

the essential nature of colonial folklore collections [comes down to the fact that] the collector represented the power of the state for the narrator, and the narrator represented above all the colonized subject who was obliged to communicate what he was being asked.

(2010: 47)

Scheub has certainly tried to distance himself from this type of practice, making "every attempt to record the stories and histories exactly as they were performed," including not imposing formal structure (paragraphs, punctuation), so that they could "be viewed as works of unbroken continuity" (Scheub 2006: xviii). As Isidore Okpewho argues, many view this approach as a success:

[E]ven as he brought his baggage of literate insights with him into the field of oral arts, [Scheub] managed to set his sights squarely on what oral literary scholars have come to recognize as the ground-zero of creativity in oral culture: performance as the enabling plane on which the sensibilities of both artist and audience are united in the molding of the emergent narrative.

(2006: x)

In detailing the importance of sustaining tradition in the apartheid era, such collections can be seen as a type of politicized commentary. However, this collection also contains stories which directly discuss ways of challenging oppression – such as "Chakijana, Zulu Freedom-Fighter" – also included in Scheub's *The Tongue is Fire* (1996), a heavily politicized collection which focuses on storytellers confronting apartheid's evils through the use of myth and metaphor. In this tale Chakijana, named after the traditional Zulu trickster figure, uses his extraordinary abilities to thwart

the whites. Tellingly, in the original recorded performance in *South African Voices*, Scheub uses a pseudonym for the storyteller for fear of repercussions from the apartheid government.

Both Scheub's and Jordan's collections demonstrate that there have been significant attempts made to honor indigenous South African traditions, but others have been less successful – or at least more contentious. There are inevitable difficulties for anyone trying to reclaim a sense of personal identity and pride through storytelling in a post-conflict society, but these are exacerbated when one's stories arguably contribute to both the stabilization and legitimation of the ideals which underpinned the unjust regime. Folktales are able to provide a platform for the political concerns of many of apartheid's victims, but they also potentially allow a politically recognized and approved victim subject position to be fashioned. In a segregated community, the disenfranchised can become "alienated from their indigenous society" (L.N. Jordan 1973: ix). This type of 'acculturation' can lead to works which straddle both sides of the segregated society whilst ultimately failing to fully represent either. This is the case in Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa's *Indaba, My Children* (1964 [1985]): an "epic" collection of Bantu folklore which, as a "narrative of the historian," purports to only contain accurate recordings (1985: Dustcover). Unlike Jordan or Scheub, Mutwa offers a long, and distinctly anglicized, single running narrative detailing the 'history' of the South African Bantu people from their creation myth all the way up to the colonial era. In his prologue, Mutwa briefly acknowledges that indigenous South African folklore is passed orally – "the Black man of Africa had no mighty scrolls on which to write the history of his land" – but unlike Jordan or Scheub provides little further information on South African folkloric practice (1985: viii). A short post-script briefly touches upon the matter again, but only in order to excuse the extreme liberties taken throughout the book (Mutwa 1985: 353–4). The stories resemble the 'Africanized' Eurocentric fairy tales previously discussed, for as Robin Derricourt points out, Mutwa "cleverly laced his imaginative accounts of Africa's traditions with material gained from diverse ethnic sources, and references to words, names, events and images that might seem familiar to his readers," whilst also utilizing "white myths [and] introducing African-sounding names to give authenticity to the text" (2011: 41, 43). This approach is not taken in order to celebrate indigenous tradition, but rather to facilitate a collection "without source, reference or evidence, being by implication derived from an oral history" (Derricourt, 2011: 43).

Indaba, My Children contains comparatively few songs and chants – an omission which becomes especially notable on the rare occasions that oral/performance tradition is mentioned. For example, in "Part Two: Stand For Ever, Oh Zima-mbje," no songs are included at all, even though the story is apparently "[c]ompiled from numerous old Mashona, Venda, Bechuana and Varozwi songs and stories" (Mutwa 1985: 48). There are occasional (subtle) references to the importance of song, such as the "Let peace reign supreme" section of "Part Three: The Journey to 'Asazi,'" but these are few and far between (Mutwa 1985: 196–215). Whilst we get meticulous narrator information from Scheub, and general information from Jordan on where his stories are collected (mostly from rural areas, but also from specific storytellers in urban areas like District Six), there is nothing of the kind in *Indaba, My Children*. This is unsurprising considering Mutwa's placement of himself as an almost mythical guardian of folklore: one of the very few special Chosen Ones who are "told

the history of the Tribes” (Mutwa 1985: viii). Arguably worse than not crediting his sources, however, is Mutwa’s repeated assertions that indigenous folklore cannot be modified at all, and that the guardians are apparently bound by oath “never to alter, add or subtract any word” of the stories under pain of falling “immediately under a High Curse which covered him, his children and his children’s children” (1985: viii). This is in direct contradiction to what has previously been shown as intrinsic to the tradition: South African tales are never meant to be captured in one form and are deliberately, and constantly, altered. As Scheub points out, a South African indigenous performer “is often judged on the freshness which she brings to the externalization of images that the members of her audiences have heard countless times” (1973: 9). In his postscript, Mutwa admits to occasional “flights of fancy” in order “to maintain interest and avoid boredom,” but even the most generous critic can see that this all-too brief note has been hastily tacked onto the very end in order to excuse bad behavior but not to undermine any of the claims made before – as they, of course, underpin the entire book (1985: 354).

Mutwa makes some problematic claims when it comes to folkloric tradition, but the content of his tales is also of concern. Charles P. Blakney argues that the book contains no authentic Bantu folklore at all, and that it is “utterly without redeeming historical value” (1968: 122–5). According to Blakney, both the “style and content” (1968: 122–5) of the book clearly indicates that the bulk of Mutwa’s material comes not from tribal tradition, but rather from contemporary Eurocentric sources which glamorize and exotify African culture. Even the drawings, which attempt to “give the fantasy a veneer of authenticity,” are primarily Egyptian and Phoenician images and thus have nothing to do with Zulu tradition (Blakney 1968: 122–5). There is “not a chance,” Blakney asserts, that these stories have been passed down to Mutwa because “[t]he people and events in this book make such a long list of inconsistencies that they are not worth describing” (1968: 122–5). However, other scholars see Mutwa’s book as “a linguistic triumph” (Rose 1965: 471–2). Brian Rose argues that *Indaba, My Children* has merit because Mutwa has an “unusually extensive” range of knowledge for a Zulu man (in that he knows something of the customs and folklore of not only his own tribe but also that of other Southern African people) and that he “is a fine storyteller in any time or place” (1965: 471–2). Rose concedes that most of this knowledge is imparted without any “evidence or support,” but argues that this might not matter when it comes to folklore, especially when one considers the complex interplay between “tribal tradition [and] speculative frolic” (1965: 471–2). The line might indeed be fine, but this doesn’t change the fact that Mutwa’s book repeatedly purports to give an absolutely authentic account of Bantu folklore specifically in order to ensure that accurate records exist so that the stories are not forgotten or altered beyond recognition. Rose might feel that the “African critics” who have railed against the book are splitting hairs, and that it “won’t matter to future readers whether these stories represent a faithful repetition or whether, touched by a certain cloudy brilliance, Mutwa has individualised them beyond recognition” (1965: 471–2), but it is understandable that scholars take issue with Mutwa when he is reinforcing and reifying destructive assumptions about Africa and its people whilst so many others are trying to challenge them.

Mutwa’s false and contradictory statements, as well as his refusal or incapacity to recognize disciplinary boundaries and different epistemological systems of

explanation, do little to support this book as a valuable folkloric text. There is, however, a valid political argument buried somewhere deep within. Mutwa asserts that all the violence in South Africa is caused “by one thing – the total lack of understanding between black and white; the utter failure of one race of human beings to understand what goes on the minds of the other race” (1985: ix). It is a misunderstanding, he tells his readers, that is “mostly on ... the white man’s side” because so “few white people have ever bothered to study the African people carefully,” relying instead on “useless book[s] full of errors, wrong impressions and just plain nonsense” (Mutwa 1985: ix). One could argue, however, that a book riddled with inaccuracies perpetuating racial misconceptions is not the best way to facilitate greater understanding. As Blakney points out, whilst Mutwa’s “book is worthless as a source of historical information about Africa, it may be of interest to historians of a future generation as it oozes with the symptoms of South Africa’s sickness” (1968: 122–5). There are many examples in literature of the healing capacity of storytelling when it comes to violent pasts: it has the potential to heal wounds by giving a voice to the previously marginalized and dispossessed, as well as offering expression to structural forms of violence and social suffering. Yet as mentioned earlier it can also unfortunately contribute to securing relations of power that perpetuate the marginalization of storytellers/artists. *Indaba, My Children* can be seen as “a symptom of historical process” that reveals the “tragedy” of a “generation of detribalized Africans” (Blakney 1968: 122–5). It is unsurprising that the book fails as an authentic representation of black South Africans when the author has been denied both “the authentic tradition of the Zulu” as well as “any valid participation in Western society” (Blakney 1968: 122–5). The book reasserts a number of problematic values perpetuated by an unjust social system, which is exacerbated by the fact that those “with the necessary affluence to buy this book [and who] take so much pleasure from it ... believe what they read there is the real, secret Africa” (Blakney 1968: 122–5). As Blakney argues, it is “frightening” to realize that Mutwa is not writing this book to preserve South African folklore, but rather to pander to those “white men in southern Africa [who] are willing to pay for what they want to hear about themselves” (1968: 122–5). Indeed, Mutwa “intend[ed] this book to be the forerunner of many more to come,” and did gain great success from both it and its follow-ups (Mutwa 1985: xi–xii). One could argue that it is a positive political step in the right direction to see a black African succeed using the fruits of his own indigenous culture, but in the rampant commercialism courted by texts like Mutwa’s we see a further representation of the disastrous economic consequences of colonialism (for the indigenous people). Mutwa’s book is constructed not to preserve indigenous South African identity as much as it is to court cultural prestige by capitalizing on changing public perception. This in itself perpetuates colonial ideals in that it mimics self-serving colonial collectors’ appropriation of indigenous folklore for monetary gain. Mutwa’s book is, as P.L. van den Berghe states, “an interesting document demonstrating the terrifying efficiency of the South African system of oppression in warping human minds” (1972: 140–1).

CONCLUSION

Whilst storytelling has redemptive powers it also carries with it attending dangers of reifying as ‘victims’ those who experienced the many injustices of apartheid. Folktales

are able to reveal hidden and manipulated truths, but when a storyteller fails to be true to the core of their tradition their tales can end up obscuring the social and historical dynamics that produced the problems in the first place. As shown, some of the storytellers and collectors who have produced the best-known collections of South African tales are often the same ones who continue to suffer from apartheid's most persisting forms of marginalization; there is as much potential for storytelling to perpetuate forms of political disempowerment as there is for its potential to heal and transform individuals and societies. The nostalgia for the past which books like Mutwa's propagate is problematic because the suggestion of a romanticized, exotic Africa condemns the indigenous people as ineffectual in their resistance to continued colonial manipulation: the social spheres of colonial authority are still present in these texts, even though they claim to move beyond them. The consequences of this kind of romantic revision is not only that it perpetuates the convention itself, but that it also prolongs social and cultural tensions which could potentially be mitigated. Additionally, the use of unsuited literary structures created by the colonizer for the assimilation of indigenous narratives militates against the need of the exploited to reclaim traditions which could significantly aid their healing, transformative process. Whilst books like Mutwa's highlight a number of questions central to postcolonial theory, namely whether it is possible for the indigenous subjugated voice to truly attain agency after such an extensive period of extreme social inequality, storytellers in South Africa must continue to strive for integrity, and to avoid presenting caricatured constructions which mirror the disturbing aspects of what they are trying to challenge.

There are, of course, real limitations in presenting oral, performance-based tales; it is, as Scheub argues, a "terrible injustice to the performer and the tradition" when oral art is transferred into written word (1973: 11). These stories were never intended to be delivered in written form, yet we must acknowledge that the world has changed, and that traditions cannot always remain unaltered. Like the *iintsomi* themselves, the tradition must be flexible if it is to survive. There are difficulties, to be sure, but we have also come a long way. Work like Jordan's and Scheub's has helped the world accept the validity of South Africa's oral and performance tradition, and scholars are now attempting to build a critical analysis of oral narratives from a literary critical perspective whilst acknowledging the vital aspects of oral literature: for example, the importance of performance and its devices in establishing the foundation, structure and flow of the narrative; the acceptance of tribal tradition and custom in context of the stories; and the understanding of the essential connection between the audience and the storyteller. We acknowledge that the tales, as transcribed in books, have been removed from what many argue to be their most essential aspect, and that without the performance many of the nuances are forfeited (which is compounded by those already lost in the process of translation), but whilst we understand that we cannot appreciate these tales as they are meant to be appreciated that does not mean that we should discount them. Many scholars and storytellers/artists are committed to overcoming the problems inherent in oral/performance-based folklore: many contemporary books, like Tony Fairman's *Bury My Bones but Keep My Words: African Tales for Retelling* (1991), are even "written for retelling and listeners are encouraged to join in the tellings with appropriate background noises and songs, just as they do in Africa" (cover). Such books offer detailed descriptions of place, sights, smells, etc.

in order to create atmosphere, and instructions alongside the stories on how to group readers together to facilitate oral performances. As Fairman states, he wants readers

to take [the tales] off the page and give them life. Go and tell them, share them ... Telling is more fun than reading because each telling is different. You can never tell a tale in the same way to different listeners.

(1991: 11)

Literature exists which actively promotes the South African tradition, and which emphasizes how important it is to share these stories. If we continue to strive to find ways to honor the traditions which lie at the heart of South African folklore, then we will be able to keep the spirit of it alive regardless of the challenges the future brings.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

STRANGERS AND DEFIANT MAIDS

Empire and the African folk narrative

—♦—
Andrew Teverson

Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip ... By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.

(Frantz Fanon, 1961 [2001: 169])

History teaches us that ... whatever may be the material aspects of [colonial] domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned ... In fact, to take up arms to dominate a people is, above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least to neutralize, to paralyze, its cultural life.

(Amílcar Cabral, 1970 [1979: 139–40])

At the turn of the twentieth century it had become a priority for the Folklore Society of Great Britain to promote the collection and preservation of popular traditions and customs in the nation's overseas territories. The Empire was still expanding – 1900 had added two further territories in Southern Africa to Britain's global possessions following victories in the Second Boer War – and the Society, led by its then president E.S. Hartland, was concerned that the march of Empire should be matched by the march of anthropology, ethnology and folklore studies. To secure this, The Folklore Society, in collaboration with the Anthropological Institute, petitioned Joseph Chamberlain as Britain's Colonial Secretary to establish a commission to “enquire into the customs and institutions of the native races” of newly acquired regions and to allocate appropriate funding for this commission to carry out its work (Hartland 1903: 73). The German Government, the petitioners observed, had spent the substantial sum of £25,000 on anthropological expeditions in German owned territories in 1898 alone; the USA maintained the Bureau of Ethnology at the cost of \$40,000 a year; and the self-ruling colonies of Queensland and the Cape Colony had been swift to recognise “the political necessity of an accurate register of the customs and institutions ... of the coloured peoples beneath their sway” (Hartland 1901: 39). In order not to be left behind, the Society argued (unsuccessfully, as it transpired), the British Government should follow suit and supply appropriate funding to ensure that the “great blanks” in British imperial knowledge could be filled (Hartland 1901: 38).

This was the message that Hartland articulated for the Folklore Society on the occasion of his Retiring Presidential Address, made towards the end of 1900. “We believe,” Hartland informed the Society:

that by no means as effectual as the methodical study of the people and their customs and beliefs can their proper government be secured. No ruler who does not understand his subjects can govern them for the best advantage, either theirs or his.
(Hartland 1901: 38)

This statement, in Richard Dorson’s assessment, is one of the most overt manifestations the “empire theory” of applied folklore: the theory that the primary value of colonial folklore collection is that it gives “practical advantages for the governors, district officers, and judges’ working overseas for ‘an enlightened mother-country’” (Dorson 1968: 332). This outlook, Dorson notes, was subsequently consolidated in the revised edition of the Society’s *Handbook of Folklore*, completed in 1914 by Charlotte Burne, which was conceived at least in part to offer practical guidance in folklore collection to “missionaries, travellers, settlers, and others whose lot is cast among uncivilised or half civilised populations abroad” (Dorson 1968: 333).

Few of those who heard Hartland’s address in 1900 would have been surprised by this pragmatic approach to folktale collection in the British Empire. For several decades preservers of folklore had been emphasizing the utility of folklore collection in imperial contexts. One of the earliest collectors of verbal folk traditions in Africa, the German missionary Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle, had noted in his parallel English translation of proverbs, tales and fables from the Bornu language (1854) that the materials he had assembled would provide “practical” support for European missionaries seeking to gain acquaintance with the language by allowing them to “hear natives express their own thoughts in their own mother tongue” (1854: vi). In a similar vein, George McCall Theal writes in the introduction to his collection of Xhosa folk tales that knowledge of folklore is necessary “in order to obtain correct information concerning an uncivilised race” (1882: vi); and Henry Callaway, in *Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus in their Own Words* (1868) notes that the “chief practical use” of his collection was to establish knowledge of the “minds and modes of thought” of “savage men” with a view to using that knowledge to “bestow upon us [missionaries and colonisers] the means of bringing ... culture to bear upon them” (Callaway 1868: Preface, n. p.). Whilst utilitarian approaches to tradition are widely in evidence, however, imperial collectors of tradition rarely if ever reflected on the distorting effect that such objectives might have on the materials preserved. Hartland sees no conflict between his proposal to use folklore to reinforce imperial ambitions and his desire to assemble an accurate register of the traditions of newly acquired territories. Likewise, for collectors such as Koelle, Theal and Callaway, there is no perceived tension between the claim that the stories are collected in order to fulfill a useful function for Europeans, and their simultaneous assertions that the resulting archive of gathered materials will supply what Theal calls “correct information.”

In response, scholars who have reassessed these materials from an anticolonial perspective have sought to elucidate the various ways in which imperial ambitions clouded the objectivity of European collectors and so compromised the scholarly accuracy of collecting practices in the age of empire (see Abrahams 1983: xiv–xv;

Naithani 2010; Finnegan 2012: 30–49). Ruth Finnegan notes, for instance, that collections of prose folk tales in Africa during the imperial era tended to preserve, disproportionately, narratives about animals and animal fables, because these tales seemed to their European collectors “to fit certain preconceptions about African mentality” (2012: 307–8). Likewise, imperial collections tend to use folktales to emphasize acts of magical and animistic thinking, and depictions of ritualized violence or cannibalism, because these practices were associated by imperial scholars with the “savage” world views of societies at a lower stage of cultural evolution (see for instance, Lang 2015: 82–6). Conversely, the philosophical dimensions of African folk cultures are all but ignored by imperial collectors, as are the aesthetic qualities of the tales or individualized elements of performance. The preference of imperial collectors is to see the African folktale as a static indicator of a tribal mentality that Europe has outgrown, not as a unique act of artistic expression subject to history and cultural change.

Comparisons of European imperial collections with Roger Abrahams’s anthology of African folktales published in 1983 serve to illustrate this point. Abrahams has a small number of animal fables in his collection, but also incorporates a section on stories designed to provoke debate and contemplation (“Stories to Discuss and Even Argue About”), a section about the challenges of “Making a Way Through Life,” and a section on “Tales in Praise of Great Doings.” Abrahams’s anthology moreover, as much as possible, seeks to emphasize distinctive individual performance over notions of collective, tribal or ahistorical mediation. This is especially evident in his version of the widely-told story of the young woman who follows an attractive man into the bush only to discover that he is a spirit who must return his borrowed human features one-by-one to an array of sinister entities. In place of a single narration of this story, Abrahams anthologizes three variants of the narrative recorded by Donald Cosentino in Sierra Leone on the evening of September 19, 1973, under the title “A Defiant Maid Marries a Stranger,” and told as part of a storytelling competition among the Mende (Cosentino 1982: 164–79; Abrahams 1983: 89–105). The individual narrator for each version of the story is identified by name, and the stories diverge significantly as each of these narrators endeavors to out-perform the others. Thus, the first storyteller, Hannah Samba, tells a cautionary tale, in which the young woman (Yombo) is punished with a lingering death for the intemperate desire she shows in following the spirit (Kpana) into the bush, whilst the second storyteller, Mariatu Sandi, who observes that she is telling the story “for us fornicators” (Cosentino 1982: 167), allows her protagonist to trick the spirit captor and enrich herself – a development that, in the view of Cosentino, shatters the impression created by Samba’s narrative “that female subservience is good and that female defiance is bad” and pierces “the illusion that the control of illusion is itself a masculine category, and that ignorance is the necessary lot of women” (156). A third storyteller, known simply as Manungo, then offers a version of the narrative in which, following the pattern of the “Kind and Unkind Girls” story type (ATU 480), one protagonist is rewarded with riches for following the advice of the spirit to approach the denizens of its world without revulsion, whilst another, who fails to follow advice and reveals her disgust, is punished with a box full of ferocious creatures that kill her and her family. This last version of the story, according to Cosentino, mediates between “the argument set up by Hannah and Mariatu” by rejecting both the victim protagonist of Samba and the “unscrupulous matriarch” of Mariatu, and providing instead two female characters, one of

whom shows consideration and so secures an advantageous outcome for herself, the other of whom is self-interested and is punished accordingly (1982: 160). The three stories in this respect follow the argumentative pattern of thesis, antithesis and synthesis: Samba and Sandi use the story to develop contrasting arguments about female behavior and identity, and Manungo concludes with a variant that represents a negotiation between the extremes.

In addition to competing through the plots, each of these storytellers vies with the others in uses of narrative detail and elaboration: the narrators display their impressive “command of ideophonic sound effects” (1982: 90), they reveal their narrative virtuosity by introducing elements of contemporary detail into the stories (in Samba’s story the spirit gives the young woman £100 not to follow him into the bush), and they show their adaptability by commenting on the context in which the story is told. Sandi, for example, playfully identifies her female protagonist as the source of the wealth of the white folklorists who have joined the assembly to hear the story and shown themselves so “partial to [Mende] affairs” (Cosentino 1982: 97); she also observes in an aside that it is the glitter of the spirit Kpana’s gold ring that gave white people the electricity “which shines so today” (Cosentino 1982: 97). Such mediations of tradition reveal folk narrative culture to be adaptable, responsive to environment, dynamic and contextually aware. As Abraham’s notes in his introduction, imperial collections are unable to capture these dimensions of African tradition because “the missionary and the colonial administrator set down these stories with other objectives than the understanding of a culture and the place of performance within it” (1983: xiv). Likewise, Cosentino, commenting on the “piecemeal” collections of “missionaries, linguists, and colonial administrators,” notes that:

The difficulty with [colonial] collections lies in their lack of context and any indication that the texts are translations of a lively art. The result of avoiding context and the elements of performance is just another collection of tales which may be amusing, or startling, or inexplicable, but which nonetheless betrays no sense of the often devastating irony which inspired them, of the awesome intellectual rigour, daredevil wit, and dramatic skills which saw them through performance. These latter qualities are only revealed when oral narratives are performed within their natural cultural context, before a live audience and in a community which the performer knows and in which he is known. The profoundest significance of the *dɔmei* [Mende story] is lost when it is presented as an atomic text.

(1982: 12)

An emphasis on performance and contextual variation also characterizes literary uses of this narrative tradition in modern African writing. In the Nigerian novelist Amos Tutuola’s first published novel, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952 [1961]) the narrative of the bush spirit – described here as “a beautiful ‘complete’ gentleman” (Tutuola 1961: 18) – takes different form when retold, in two variations, by the novel’s eponymous first person narrator, who is engaged in a quest to recover his deceased Palm-Wine tapster from “the Deads’ Town” (96). The first version of the story is relayed to account for the disappearance of a young woman whom the Drinkard has agreed to rescue in return for information about the whereabouts of his tapster. This narration of the story, broadly speaking, follows the traditional

story: a young woman whilst working in a market espies a Beautiful Complete Gentleman and decides to follow him; she pursues him out of the market and into “an endless forest” (19) only to discover, after the gentleman has returned all his borrowed body parts, that he is merely a skull. In skull form, the gentleman – no longer beautiful or complete – introduces the young woman to his community of skulls, then he enslaves her, forcing her to sit on a frog with a magic cowry around her neck that makes a terrible warning noise whenever she tries to escape. In this way she remains imprisoned by the gentleman in disguise whom she has so unwisely followed into the bush.

A second iteration of the story then unfolds as the Drinkard endeavors to retrace the young woman’s steps in order to locate and rescue her. In this elaboration of the story, the Drinkard himself waits in the market for the Beautiful Complete Gentleman to reappear, follows him to his home in the forest, personally witnesses the return of the body parts and the reduction to a skull, and discovers the location of the young woman, who he rescues using a series of marvelous transformations. Finally, the Drinkard returns the young woman to her father by transforming himself into a bird and carrying her, in the form of a kitten, in his pocket. The imprisoning cowry remains magically attached to her neck, however, and a further series of adventures in the domain of the skulls must follow before the Drinkard can release the young woman, now his betrothed wife, from its malign influence.

As Tutuola’s double iteration of this story may suggest, his narration constitutes both a recuperation of the narrative tradition as mediated by preceding storytellers, and a self-conscious literary treatment that innovates upon that tradition. The cautionary story featuring the young woman restages the conventional moral not to rely excessively upon appearances and to heed the warnings of wise and knowledgeable others. This moral established, however, Tutuola puts the story to new uses. In its second variation, the story becomes a heroic adventure in which a male protagonist overcomes fearsome opponents in pursuit of his goals; it also becomes the means by which the protagonist gains a wife and ultimately a child, a development that initiates the next narrative sequence of the novel, involving the birth of the “half-bodied baby” Zurrjir (35). The story is thus remodelled so it can operate as a narrative component in a composite sequence of narratives; it is also adapted to conform with Tutuola’s overriding thematic preoccupations in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* – his concern with the first-person experiences of a central male protagonist, and his desire to investigate the motives and outcomes of heroic activity. As Ato Quayson observes, “Tutuola appropriates the tale of the ‘complete gentleman’ but shifts its axis so that it does not remain only a cautionary tale to young girls but additionally becomes ... a means of reinforcing the heroic qualities of the hero” (1997: 48–9). In so doing, Tutuola appropriates a narrative traditionally applied to female experience, but he does so not to reinstate the image of a central male hero, but to extend the traditional narrative’s conventional warning about arrogance and self-interested action to his male protagonist. As commentators upon the novel observe, including, most influentially, Chinua Achebe, Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, taken as a whole, is an ethical fable that illustrates the monstrous forms of disorder and imbalance that arise from excessive immersion “in pleasure to the exclusion of all work” (Achebe 1990: 68–9). The Drinkard, like many protagonists of folk and fairy tales, begins his quest as an indulgent and self-orientated young

man, concerned only with his own pleasures and satisfactions, but must learn, in the course of his struggles, that extravagance breeds monstrosity, and that social stability and renewal depends on the capacity of individuals, such as himself, to resist greed and instead to work for the benefits of society more generally. This moral lesson is allegorized in the novel by a magical egg donated by the dead Tapster after he has refused to return with the Drinkard to the land of the living. The magical egg allows the Drinkard, on his return home, to provide for his people in a time of famine, and so, for a time at least, operates as a symbol of renewal. As events unfold, however, it becomes apparent that the egg in itself does not offer a lasting solution to social problems. As people learn of its magical powers they arrive in greater and greater numbers until the egg is accidentally smashed during a bout of wrestling and transformed, after the Drinkard tries to repair it, into a malignant agency that generates whips and suffering. The Drinkard therefore proposes that he and the “old people” of the village come together to make a sacrifice which will be “carried to Heaven in heaven” (Tutuola 1961: 124). This sacrifice accepted, the rains begin to fall, and the novel ends with the reassurance that “there was no famine again” (125). Tutuola’s intimation in this final passage is that dependence on magical solutions must be superseded, and that lasting harmony requires social cooperation combined with humility in the face of greater powers. As Quayson notes, “[t]he final emphasis of the narrative is not on external aids to social being, but on the intrinsic value of wisdom subserving communal interests” (1997: 53).

The attainments gained in the course of the Drinkard’s struggle with the Beautiful Complete Gentleman must be understood in the context of these broader developments in the novel: they are individual attainments gained primarily through magic rather than merit that satisfy the Drinkard’s immediate ambition, but they do not represent his highest attainment, which is to realise that though he may be able to achieve much for himself through individual, magically-enabled prowess, eventual success lies in working with humility towards collective goals. In this respect, the story of the Beautiful Complete Gentleman in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, ultimately functions to support Tutuola’s principal ethical argument, that selfish action must give way to a recognition of the value of social responsibility.

CULTURAL RECOVERY AND THE FOLKTALE

In the second epigraph to this chapter, Amílcar Cabral, leader of the political and military movement for resistance to Portuguese rule in Guinea and Cape Verde until his assassination, with the complicity of Portuguese agents, in 1973, describes what may be regarded as a foundational realization of anti-colonial art and literature: that imperial conquest depends not on military and political force alone, but also upon parallel and supportive acts of repression within the sphere of culture. Writing in another context, the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o refers to this as the “cultural bomb”: the use of culture as an instrument of violence “to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves” (1986: 3). Confronted with this strategy of cultural domination, Cabral argues, it becomes imperative to respond to imperialism in the sphere of arts and ideas as well as in the sphere of political struggle: to strive to reassert “the cultural personality of the dominated people”

in the face of the systematic misinformation of an interested alien power (Cabral 1979: 142–3). In Cabral’s resonant image:

A people who free themselves from foreign domination will not be culturally free unless ... they return to the upward paths of their own culture. The latter is nourished by the living reality of the environment and rejects harmful influences as much as any kind of subjection to foreign cultures. We see therefore that, if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an *act of culture*.

(143)

It is in this aspect of the struggle that the materials of folk culture – stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, legends, myths – are made newly meaningful. Folktales become a source of national pride, a medium of resistance and a foundation for national reconstruction. Cabral makes this function of the folktale explicit in his directives to the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde in 1965 in which he instructs party activists, as part of an eight-step programme of practical guidance, to

Protect and develop manifestations of our people’s culture, respect and ensure respect for the usages, customs and traditions of our land, so long as they are not against human dignity, against the respect we must have for every man, woman or child. Support manifestations of art ... dancing, singing and theatre ... collect texts of legends and tales told by the people.

(1979: 243)

The result of such calls for recuperation, has been an unprecedented, if sometimes underappreciated, global movement for the recovery of narrative traditions that rivals in scope and significance the major movements for folk- and fairy-tale recuperation that have taken place in Europe, including the Romantic folk revival spearheaded by German artists and intellectuals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Whilst recuperative practices of this kind have motivated many writers who make use of folk narrative traditions in anticolonial literature, however, attitudes to tradition and its functions in anticolonial contexts have varied considerably (see Hogan 2000: 9–17). Nativist movements advocating a return to precolonial beliefs and practices have played a significant role in supporting struggles for independence as well as in subsequent struggles to decolonize creative and intellectual cultures, but equally, a broad cross section of scholars and artists have expressed reservations about aspects of the nativist agenda (see for instance Soyinka 1975; Appiah 1992). Notably, in his ground breaking essay “Sur la culture nationale” (“On National Culture”) in *Les Damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) Frantz Fanon recognises the appeal of a nativist aesthetic to anticolonial intellectuals seeking to “renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of the life of their people” (2001: 168–9), but he simultaneously cautions against the temptation to allow the pursuit of pre-colonial tradition to stand in place of support for organized political resistance. “You will never make colonialism blush for shame by spreading out little-known cultural treasures under its eyes,” Fanon warns (2001: 179–80). Instead, the politicized anticolonial writer should turn away from the relics of the past, “the

cast-offs of thought, its shells and corpses” (181), and work to join “the people ... in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called in question” (182–3).

Fanon’s scepticism about the political value of romantic appeals to tradition gives shape to an abiding suspicion of the discipline of folklore in his writings: “It is around the peoples’ struggles” that African culture “takes on substance,” he argues, “and not around songs, poems or folklore” (189; see also Julien 2000). Such arguments, as David Macey has observed, were directed at least in part at the proponents of the *négritude* movement with whom Fanon shared a platform when he first delivered a version of his essay at The Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Rome in 1959 (Macey 2012: 371–4). For Fanon, it was critical that the nation should be defined as a product of political will, an agreement between disparate ethnicities and tribal groups, and not, as some nativists urged, as a form of primal ethnic unity determined by shared ancestry and the traditional trappings of that ancestry. To the extent that a retreat to folklore represents an endeavor to invoke tribal or ethnic origins, therefore, Fanon sees it as a danger to his project of securing the political unity of the modern nation.

Fanon’s suspicion of applications of folklore, however, should not lead us to conclude that he sees no role for traditional materials in situations of political struggle. In fact, his essay goes on to outline the function of such materials, as he sees it, in acts of revolution. This is articulated most clearly in his analysis of the transformation of Algerian oral storytelling during the war of Independence. Before 1952, Fanon asserts, Algerian storytellers were politically ineffectual, their stories were “stereotyped and tedious to listen to” (2001: 193). In the moment of struggle, however, these storytellers “completely overturned their traditional methods of storytelling and the contents of their tales,” until “their public, which was formerly scattered, became compact” (193–4). “Colonialism made no mistake,” Fanon notes, “when from 1955 on it proceeded to arrest these storytellers systematically” (194). The source of this change in the political efficacy of their storytelling, in Fanon’s assessment, was a rejection of the notion of storytelling as a return or a recovery, and its emergence as a medium of transformation. In Fanon’s terms:

the oral tradition – stories, epics and songs of the people – which formerly were filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernise the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke, together with the names of heroes and the types of weapons ... The formula “This all happened long ago” is substituted by that of “What we are going to speak of happened somewhere else, but it might well have happened here today, and it might happen tomorrow.”

(193)

For Fanon, in other words, storytelling in the revolutionary context becomes most effective politically when it ceases to refer to the past, or to signify lost (mythical) ancestral unities, and instead begins to invoke the new revolutionary unities of the anticolonial state.

It is instructive to understand the political functions of the folk and fairy tale in literature of the anticolonial and postcolonial period in the context of this debate in

which Fanon and Cabral are engaged. On the one hand, literature of the period, as Fanon and Cabral recognize, has a tendency to look back to the traditions of the past as a means of finding a cultural grounding and simultaneously of rejecting the distorting politicized accounts of native tradition offered by imperial mediators of folklore. This position is articulated influentially by the scholars Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike, who summon African writers to engage in a “restorative cultural enterprise” (1983: 3) that will involve “a devoted apprenticeship to African orature” (146) and resistance to the forms of modernist experimentation associated with European “nouveau mania” (89). “[S]ince our past has been vilified by imperialism, and since an imperialist education has tried to equip us with all manner of absurd views and reactions to our past,” they write, “... we ... need to reclaim and rehabilitate our genuine past, to repossess our true and entire history in order to acquire a secure launching pad into our future” (256). On the other hand, many writers of the period argue that the past conjured up by nativism is frequently a fabrication, and that, in any case, the need to confront contemporary political problems necessitates the reinvention of tradition, not return. As Fanon argues, “[t] colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope” (2001: 187). Quayson in his important study of Nigerian literature of the mid- to late-twentieth century identifies this latter orientation as a primary aesthetic feature of Nigerian writing of the colonial and post-colonial period. Writers such as D.O. Fagunwa, Tutuola, Soyinka and Ben Okri, Quayson’s study argues, seek continuity with indigenous sources, but simultaneously work to renew those indigenous sources in the light of new social and political priorities and the different aesthetic requirements of the novel. The writer, in Quayson’s terms engages in “strategic transformation” of oral traditions that serves to both establish a relationship with “indigenous conceptual resources” and, simultaneously, to enable a “deployment of orality for different purposes” (1997: 10).

We may see the operation of the strategic transformation Quayson describes in Tutuola’s treatment of the story of the Beautiful Complete Gentleman discussed above. Tutuola reconceives the narrative as a fiction that operates in the broader structure of the novel in English, and that acts as an interface between Yoruba traditions and international readers of modern fiction. He also redeploys the narrative to address the central themes of his novel: in particular, to interrogate concepts of male heroism, and to provide a traditional rooting for his ethical critique of greed and self-interest. Tutuola thus, as Quayson notes, makes “discursive use” of tradition “in order to create a universe which is both Yoruba and also peculiarly his own” (1997: 45).

Though Quayson’s concept of “strategic transformation” is intended to describe the process of adaptation from oral tradition to literary text, however, the concept may also be productively applied to variations of the narrative in recorded oral traditions. The story of the “Defiant Maid,” as told by Samba, Sandi and Manungo, for instance, is also subject to transformations that are shaped by the strategic objectives of the narrators. As Cosentino argues, these strategies are guided in part by competition between the storytellers: “The performance of *ḍmeisia*,” he writes:

was another dimension of their [social] rivalry, a transformation of their hostility into works of art whose final shapes were dictated not only by the imperatives

of the *domei*, but by the nature of the human relationships which bound the narrators to a lifelong competition.

(1982: 145)

The strategic uses of the story are not limited to the personal relationships between the storytellers, however, but also extend to the scenario that has brought this particular narrative event into being. This is most apparent in Sandi's story when she acknowledges the presence of the white folklorists at her narration, first through her announcement that "white people" had "long ago" taken the glitter of Kpana's ring and "turned it into ... electricity" (Cosentino 1982: 97), and then by her identification of Yombo as the source of white people's wealth, which is done in the following terms:

All this wealth passing in the world, you white people, that wealth (of yours), it is Yombo who long ago came with that wealth which you white people came with. You who are giving us money, who are partial to our affairs, it is Yombo who brought it.

(Cosentino 1982: 170)

As noted earlier, this acknowledgment indicates the adaptability and currency of her performance – its capacity to respond fluidly to circumstance – but it also shows that she is acting strategically in her storytelling to respond to the unequal power relationship represented in the figures of the observant folklorists. Her response is light hearted, but it is also pointed. In suggesting that the wealth and power of the white people comes from Yombo's victories, Sandi deflects the indignity of having taken money for her storytelling by asserting a prior right to that wealth; she also hints playfully but emphatically at the fact that European and American wealth and power depends in part upon an earlier appropriation of African resources and labor. Her forthright and provocative narrative, in this respect, is not confined to the contest over descriptions of gendered authority with her fellow storytellers, as Cosentino argues, but extends to a covert contest for authority with the white folklorists – a strategy that Cosentino either remains oblivious to or chooses not to comment upon.

This application of the story is also indicative of a broader strategic significance of the tale of the Defiant Maid in the period within which both Tutuola and the Mende storytellers were working. Tutuola rewrites the story at a critical moment of anticolonial agitation in Nigeria, just eight years prior to the attainment of Nigerian independence, and Sandi tells her version of the story, watched by Western folklorists, 12 years after Sierra Leonian Independence, in a period when the nation was struggling to divest itself of imperial legacies. In these contexts, the themes of the story, though traditional in their derivation, accrue new strategic dimensions. Specifically, the warning offered by the story not to take the appearance of gentlemanly conduct at face value, the sense that predatory intentions can come masked with a civilized exterior, and the caution against making oneself available to the entrapment and enslavement by an alien power, all have relevance as reflections on the European presence in Africa and the intellectual struggle against it. Likewise, the possibility of release from such entrapment, the promise that cunning and a distillation of native power might help resist the supremacy of the enemy, offers up affirmative messages of political hopefulness in a period of struggle. The story thus remains traditional,

and its rooting in tradition persists as an essential component of its cultural significance, but simultaneously, the narrative is transformed by the circumstances of its telling to reflect the exigence of current political realities. The folktale thus remains ideologically powerful as an appeal to the past, but it also functions as a historically mutable fiction that becomes culturally relevant as a response to the present. It is this mutability, and the capacity for relevance that it entails, that imperial approaches to the folktale in Africa so emphatically fail to recognize or to capture, with serious consequences both for the accuracy of collections in the imperial period and for the capacity of the agents of empire to grasp the significance of this avenue of dissent.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

WEST AFRICAN MAGICAL REALISM AMONG THE WONDER GENRES

Kim Anderson Sasser

[M]ost genres of [African] orality retain a comfortable relationship to magical elements.

(Quayson 2009: 160)

“Magical realism isn’t a fad – it has been around as long as art has been,” Salman Rushdie recently insisted about the narrative mode that combines literary realism with “irreducible elements” of magic (Rushdie 2015; Young and Hollaman 1984: 4). Rushdie’s argument is provocative since literary magical realism is most often thought to have emerged in Latin America in the mid-twentieth century. More importantly, it is a productive argument, for it steers conversation beyond now tired questions pertaining to magical realism’s persistence, to a point that seems self-evidently true, if largely underexplored, that magical realism could not have developed last century in a literary vacuum.

Scholars tend to begin magical realism’s story with the transdisciplinary and transnational history of the term itself: the German art historian Franz Roh’s usage in the 1920s and, even earlier, the German Romantic philosopher Novalis’s use of the term in the late-eighteenth century. Irene Guenther, Wendy Faris, Lois Parkinson Zamora, and Christopher Warnes have made significant strides historicizing magical realism in relation to these figures. What has remained little understood, however, is magical realism’s history prior to the Latin American boom (notwithstanding a few exceptions, including Warnes’s work on magical realism and romance literature) (Warnes 2009).

Of all the possibilities suggested by Rushdie’s provocation, the most salient literary generic relationship may be that between magical realism and popular narrative forms. Seminal Europeans within magical realism’s twentieth-century history seized on this relationship: Roh, the French Surrealists, and Italian Massimo Bontempelli. Roh’s term *magischer realismus*, used in 1925, implies an association between magic and indigenous beliefs that was emerging through ethnology and anthropology (Roh 1925: 4; Camayd-Freixas 2014: 4). Surrealists such as Pierre Mabille were triangulating so-called primitive peoples, the marvelous, and indigenous myth. Finally, as Erik Camayd-Freixas observes, “Bontempelli urged his fellow writers to become primitives with a past,” which

meant returning to one's national traditions, archetypes, and foundational myths—a very meaningful proposal for the young Latin American writers who were flocking to Europe at the time, and who would launch, a few years later, their own magic-realist proposals.

(Camayd-Freixas 2014: 6)

These Latin Americans are the Venezuelan Arturo Usler-Pietri, Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias. Asturias would later draw extensively from the Maya-Quiche *Popol Vuh* for his seminal magical realist novel, *Hombres de maíz* (*Men of Maize*, 1949).

From early on, scholars have recognized this relationship between indigenous narrative forms and postcolonial magical realisms within and without Latin America, though on the whole the topic remains little treated, perhaps because understandings of that relationship quickly settled into a commonsense view: magic derives from indigenous mythological sources and is pitted against European literary realism. This schema is in some respects misleading, however. Might a postcolonial magical realist narrative draw from other kinds of indigenous stories besides myth? What about instances when authors look to exogenous popular narratives, such as *The Arabian Nights* or even fairy tales? Furthermore, there are the issues that arise when Euro-American narrative categories are superimposed onto narratives from diverse non-Euro-American regions. For example, when magical realist scholars use the term *myth* in that commonsense view of magic's resource base, they seem to be signaling a form of storytelling that represents actual beliefs. Yet, in West Africa, folklore and belief intertwine, thereby frustrating the typical Euro-American distinctions between myth, legend, and folktale. As Val Olayemi explains: "In the Yoruba folktale there is evidence of practically every aspect of the supernatural in which the people believe," including the intervention of gods, demi-gods, and spirits in human lives; the dead; magic; and witches (1975: 960, 964–65, 969, 980). While magical realism has been seen as such an important postcolonial narrative mode in part because of its ability to recuperate buried cultural elements, including indigenous tales and beliefs, I hope these examples illustrate our need for more precise understandings of magical realism's relationship to popular narrative forms.

Since a study on magical realism and popular narrative forms could take many directions, I will focus, in the following discussion, upon West African magical realism. Among the West African authors considered within this corpus are Amos Tutuola, the most significant predecessor to magical realism, who began publishing in 1950s Nigeria; writing in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, Syl Cheney Coker (Sierra Leon), Kojo Laing (Ghana), and Ben Okri (Nigeria, Britain); and the twenty-first century writer Helen Oyeyemi (Nigeria, Britain). Africa/ns and African tales have been especially integral to foundational Latin American magical realist authors and their fiction. Carpentier's *The Kingdom of this World* (1949 [1957]), a novel about Afro-Haitians, begins with the powerful narrative performance of the Mandingue slave Macandal, whose "narrative arts ... held [his fellow slave Ti Noël] spellbound" (Carpentier 1957: 19). This transatlantic influence goes both ways, though. As I will show subsequently, Nigerian Kole Omotoso's literary critical writing frames African magical realism using Carpentier's term, the marvelous real.

Besides focusing regionally, I have selected a particular kind of popular narrative, the wonder tale, also known as the *Märchen*, or tale of magic. I chose the wonder tale because of its salient commonality with magical realism, magical storytelling. For this reason alone, magical realism can be situated among the wonder genres as a literary relative. Additionally, magical realism utilizes what Cristina Bacchilega has called, in regard to the fairy tale, a poetics and politics of wonder, features that are realized through magical realism's use of both senses of the word *wonder*, the noun and the verb (2013: 7). Not only does magical realism traffic in wonders, marvels, and magic, but it is also deeply concerned with affecting wonder in both readers and characters.

West African magical realism also evidences a rich, multifaceted relationship with wonder genres. It appropriates all of magical realism's capacities for wonder – those noun and verb senses – while intimating particular, localized rationales as (at least partial) motivations for doing so, namely practices of orality and the animistic “logic” of crossing ostensible binaries, to use Harry Garuba's term (267). Whilst it is impossible to generalize about all the works and authors treated within my corpus of West African magical realism, the features to which I have just pointed locate a trend within West African magical realism: the treatment of wonder as both secular and sacred, mundane and numinous. West African magical realism's wonder poetics thereby indicate ways of knowing, yet this is an epistemology that recognizes limitations in understanding as human beings encounter what Wole Soyinka has called “a manifestly complex reality” (2000: 53).

HISTORY

The interrelatedness of magical realism and the wonder tale comes more closely into view when we consider some shared historical developments that impact upon both. During the sixteenth- through the eighteenth centuries, the category of wonder was transformed in European sensibilities when the European elite performed the double gesture of demoting the marvelous and relocating it among the Other, be that otherness demarcated by gender, class, or race/geography. JoAnn Conrad explains this historical development in relation to the wonder tale:

Thematically, the fairy tales, or *contes de fées*, of the primarily female writers of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French nobility were concerned with aspects of the marvelous—transformations and wonder. However, this was the precise time at which wonders were losing ground in the court. In fact, tales of wonder had shifted from being constitutive of the elite classes in Europe to being seen as that which defined the “folk” and were relegated to the margins.

(2016: 1113)

Against the denigration of the marvelous, the *contes de fées* represent an important moment within what Jerónimo Arellano has called “the intermittent history of the marvelous,” for it constitutes a counter-current within Modernity wherein the marvelous is strategically deployed within literature (2015: 3). For this reason, the fairy tale stands as a significant antecedent to magical realism, a narrative form that pervasively has been understood to marshal the marvelous against a hegemonic literary realism and, by extension, scientific rationality and empiricism. This hermeneutic

for magical realism gains traction especially among postcolonial applications of the mode, thus creating a complex set of relationships when we consider the fairy tale's colonizing of indigenous wonder genres, as I discuss below.

In addition to its association with women and the folk, "in the early eighteenth century, the 'love of the marvelous'... came to be seen as the hallmark of the vulgar" in general; this heterogeneous group, as Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park explain, included "women, the very young, the very old, primitive peoples, and the uneducated masses" (2001: 343). The association of wonder with so-called primitives was forged beforehand, though, when Early Modern travelers and intellectuals began to display the curiosities of the New World materially in their *Wunderkammern*, or cabinets of curiosities, and linguistically in the New World chronicles of the explorers.

If the notion of the vulgar assimilates women and primitives in their common "love of the marvelous," however, the two groups fare dissimilarly when indigenous wonder genres are colonized by fairy tales. For instance, in their introduction to the collection *Fairy Tales from South Africa* (1908), E.J. Bourhill and J.B. Drake elaborate upon their title by noting that: "[a]ll the stories in this book are real Fairy Tales, just as much as 'Jack and the Giant-Killer' or 'The Sleeping Beauty'" (1908: v). Here and elsewhere indigenous wonder genres are equated with fairy stories or stories believed only by children and child-like primitives. Bacchilega and Duggan forcefully enumerate the problems that emerge from this association:

Fairy tales are wonder tales, but not all tales of wonder are fairy tales. In colonial contexts, all too commonly, the label of fairy tale has been imposed on the wondrous stories—histories, belief narratives, and fictions—of colonized peoples with damaging and lasting results. For instance, referring to Hawaiian mo'olelo (story, legend, tradition, or history) as fairy tale overlooks the intimate relationship that mo'olelo weave, linking humans to specific places, natural phenomena, and events; disconnects the stories from their native generic identification; and mistakes their ways of knowing for signs of primitivism and ignorance.

(2016: 12)

Against the denigration of the European Other for their enchanted ways of knowing and being in the world, postcolonial magical realist narratives will revalue wonder, including wonder located in indigenous beliefs and narratives. Magical realism's poetics of wonder also functions as a politics of wonder.

This application of magical realism, the deployment of the marvelous as a strategic response to the simultaneous demotion and relocation of wonder, is evident in the mode's Latin American development during the mid-twentieth century, when authors continue to associate wonder with the European Other but now transform what was a derogatory move to a celebration of Latin American difference. An often-discussed example is Carpentier's and García Márquez's appropriation of the New World Chronicles, which takes place, for instance, when García Márquez claims *The Diary of Christopher Columbus* as "the first magic piece of literature" in the Caribbean (Márquez qtd. in Kutzinski 1985: 135).

Besides drawing from the New World Chronicle, Carpentier embeds a European usage of the marvelous into the very nomenclature he coins for this Latin American literary mode. The narrative form known most commonly as magical realism was

dubbed by Carpentier *lo real maravilloso americano*, the marvelous American reality. As numerous scholars have noted, with the term *marvelous* Carpentier signals his previous association with the Surrealists, the Surrealists being fixated on the marvelous found among so-called primitive peoples, including their stories.

Subsequently, Haitian Jacques Stephen Alexis takes up an abbreviated version of Carpentier's term, *réalisme merveilleux*, in his "Of the Marvelous Realism of the Haitians" (Alexis 1956), as does Omotoso three decades later in his *The Form of the African Novel* (Omotoso 1979). Omotoso's is among the first theoretical treatments of African magical realism, followed by Brenda Cooper (1998), Garbua (2003), Gerlad Gaylard (2005), Ato Quayson (2009), and others. Herein, Omotoso inaugurates this critical discourse by associating it with a European *cum* Latin American history of wonder, something he does by employing Carpentier's term *marvelous realism* and by invoking Carpentier and Latin American magical realism more generally.

In *The Form of the African Novel*, Omotoso demonstrates awareness of other nomenclatures besides marvelous realism for this narrative mode – "marvelous realism [is] also referred to as 'magical realism' and 'marvelous American reality,'" he writes (1979: 28) – but he shows preference for Carpentier's designation. Magical realist scholars have debated the degree to which the two terms *marvelous realism* and *magical realism* reference the same literary form. Carpentier develops a peculiar vision of Latin American reality and literature with his *lo real maravilloso americano*, one that not all magical realist writers share, even within Latin America. That Omotoso selects Carpentier's terminology over and against *magical realism* has led a few scholars, the present author included, to explore the possibility of a shared vision of this literary mode and its philosophical underpinnings (Deandrea 2002; Sasser 2014). However, in light of Arellano's recent study which situates Carpentier and García Márquez within "the intermittent history of the marvelous," we might now also consider the ways in which Omotoso's terminology invites a consideration of his – and, by extension, West African magical realism's – poetics and politics of wonder. In other words, his wonder language nudges us to consider whether we can extend Arellano's geo-historical arc beyond Latin American magical realism, positioning African magical realism as an additional node in a transatlantic "intermittent history of the marvelous."

At the same time that Omotoso associates West African magical realism with its Latin American antecedents, he Africanizes it by associating West African usages with African orality. He discusses marvelous realism in his section "FON," the form of oral narratives, asserting: "one of the most important characteristic features of oral narratives which appears in modern African novels is what has been referred to in South American writing as marvelous realism" (1979: 26–7). Omotoso does not expound upon the relationship between orality and magical realism in Africa, but by associating the two he recognizes (and foresees) the integral role African tales take within these works.

POETICS AND POLITICS OF WONDER

In her introduction to a collection of wonder tales, Marina Warner explains what she calls the "doubled" nature of wonder, something that is seen even at the semantic level: "Wonder has no opposite; it springs up already doubled in itself ... It names

the marvel, the prodigy, the surprise as well as the responses they excite, of fascination and inquiry” (1996: 3). Magical realism’s generic affinities with the wonder tale surface in these dual aspects of wonder, wonder as verb (to wonder) and noun (wonders, marvels, magic). Regarding the former, magical realism *functions similarly* to wonder tales in a key characteristic, affecting wonder. This similarity is evidenced in recent scholarship. Lately, scholars of both magical realism and wonder genres have been discussing the crucial role wonder plays in each respective genre. While these discussions have remained, until now, mutually exclusive, that wonder constitutes a point of discursive overlap highlights a generic correlation.

Jack Zipes argues that in the wonder tale “the characters, settings, and motifs are combined and varied according to specific functions to induce *wonder* and *hope* for change in the audience of listeners/readers” (2006: 50). Moreover, he explains, it is this aspect that distinguishes the wonder tale, including the fairy tale, from other literary near relatives. Bacchilega has analyzed the poetics and politics of wonder at work in contemporary fairy tales (2013) as well as the indigenous Hawaiian wonder genre, the mo’olelo (2007). Regarding magical realism, Alex Nava (2013) and Arellano (2015) each have analyzed the role wonder plays in this narrative mode, both tracing a transatlantic cultural history of wonder from European usages to Latin American magical realism, Nava utilizing a theological lens and Arellano analyzing the ways in which wonder is put to work as “a public feeling” (Arellano 2015: 5).

In his study, Arellano tantalizingly suggests, if only in passing, that magical realism as a genre might be “reconceived ... as a narrative form with a clear orientation toward prosaic or worldly forms of wonder” (2015: 103). If Arellano is right that magical realism is generically “oriented” towards wonder, as I think he is, the question arises, how? To put it otherwise, in what ways does magical realism utilize a poetics of wonder? Furthermore, how does its poetics compare to that of other wonder genres? And, of importance to the present study, is there anything distinctive about West African magical realism’s handling of wonder?

Perhaps most obviously, magical realism affects wonder by trafficking in wonders, marvels, and magic. It is for this reason that the wonder tale and magical realism share positions on the spectrum of the fantastic. Both are forms of magical storytelling. Magical realist authors seem to recognize this generic affinity. Not only are seminal authors claimed by both the discursive fields of magical realism and folklore (Rushdie, Angela Carter, Okri, Günter Grass, Tutuola, and others), but magical realist authors frequently draw from wonder tales and their motifs as one resource base for their magic. West African magical realism is rife with examples, an especially intriguing and recent one being Oyeyemi’s use of fairy tales, a move that has garnered numerous comparisons with Carter. Bluebeard tales are employed in *Mr. Fox* (2011), while in *Boy, Snow, Bird* (2014) Oyeyemi utilizes “Snow White,” for instance, when the characters Bird and Snow have experiences with mirrors not reflecting their images. Tutuola in *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952) and Coker in *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar* (1990) utilize the tale type of the supernatural husband in their variants of “The Perfect Gentleman.” Brenda Cooper has suggested that we find echoes of this tale in Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991), too, in the spirits who borrow human body parts and in the man in the white suit, whom Dad shows to be a spirit (Okri 1991: 227). Besides “The Perfect Gentleman,” Coker draws from *The Nights* in *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar*. In the chapter “Ali Baba and

the Forty Thieves,” readers find a reference to Arabs bringing new forms of storytelling via the *Arabian Nights* (Coker 1990: 369–84). We also find echoes of the Ali Baba tale in the novel’s first chapter, “The Magic Lantern”: “No door was closed to [Sebastian Cromantine] now, and he was determined that never again would any be closed because he knew the magic words, Open Sesame” (Coker 1990: 15).

Apart from pointing to entire tales, magical realist narratives frequently borrow from recognized wonder genre motifs. Again, using examples from a corpus of West African magical realism, we find a magic carpet in *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar*; mirrors in *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar* and *Boy, Snow, Bird*; witches in Kojo Laing’s *Woman of the Aeroplanes* (1988) and *The Famished Road*; flying in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* and Oyeyemi’s *The Icarus Girl* (2005); and dwarfs in *The Famished Road* and *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar*.

As for West African magical realism, the wonder tales and motifs that make their way into these narratives comprise a complex matrix that cannot be separated neatly into an indigenous/exogenous bifurcation. On one hand, these authors are cosmopolitan figures, as Cooper has discussed, so have been exposed to a wide range of stories. On the other hand, African wonder tales themselves trouble an inside/outside dichotomy (Cooper 1998). In his collection of African tales of wonder, Roger D. Abrahams foregrounds that readers will find “stories in the general mold of ‘The Race of the Tortoise and the Hare,’ ‘Hansel and Gretel,’ and ‘Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.’” Also present are “the familiar wonder-tale patterns of the passing of multiple tests, the progression of magical helpers, the winning of the king’s beautiful daughter.” Abrahams accounts for this cultural convergence of tales/patterns through the historical interconnection of Africa with the rest of the “Old World”:

native [African] cultures have been strongly influenced by Mediterranean and Middle Eastern forms brought in with Islam. And in a number of other ways, too, Black African traditional practices can be seen as part-and-parcel of an Old World cultural complex.

(1983: 33)

Besides recognized wonder tales/motifs, magical realist narratives utilize all kinds of stories and tale types towards the end of wonder. In other words, regardless of their previous functions, any kind of story might be appropriated towards magical realism’s wonder poetics. In Oyeyemi’s *Boy, Snow, Bird*, Bird can speak with spiders and recounts tales about the trickster Anansi, a phenomenon the narrative uses to suggest Bird is a trickster figure (Lau 2016: 384). Laing’s *Woman of the Aeroplane* depicts the magical feats of its trickster, Kwame Atta, an inventor who makes impossible creations such as a cassava-making machine that fills the sky with cassava flakes. Okri’s *Famished Road* integrates stories about heroes, the abiku, etiology, the Biblical Lazarus, and many other things. Tutuola’s *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* recreates the cautionary tale (Quayson 1997: 46). These few examples are enough, I hope, to illustrate this point: magical realism is indiscriminate in the narrative resources it appropriates for the marvelous.

Magical realist narratives the world over evidence this same indiscriminateness. John Stevens argues that “myths and folktales are drawn into magical realism narratives from three principal sources—classical mythology, Christian myth (narratives and

motifs), and local or indigenous traditions” (2016: 601). If West African magical realism compares in this way to international usages of the mode, though, it may do so for particular, localized reasons, namely to do with widespread practices of African orality. Stephen Belcher explains: “generic boundaries ... in Africa are far more fluid than the theory of folklore genre classification might wish.” For example, Belcher states: “Many folktales are mythological or etiological in content” (2016: 15–17). The generic porosity that characterizes African orality has shaped a creative environment, a habit of mind, that has carried over to literary texts, including magical realism, which similarly maintain a generic “incorporativeness,” as Pietro Deandrea has called this same feature (2002: xi).

Just as the practice of generic porosity travels from orality to literary magical realism, we also see in magical realism what Ruth Finnegan has called the “idiosyncratic” performance of oral narratives. As Finnegan explains this feature of oral performances, there is no one correct version of a story (2012: 375). Rather, “stories are ... capable of infinite expansion, variation, and embroidery by narrators” (Finnegan 2012: 376). While Finnegan is referring specifically to her work among the Limba, she generalizes this feature of oral performances when she points to the scholarly neglect of it: “The question of the originality of the individual teller, whether in performance or composition, is one of the most neglected aspects of African oral narratives” (2012: 376). West African magical realist authors demonstrate this practice of idiosyncratic adaptations of tales in their combining and recombining of all kinds of tales/motifs towards the end of wonder.

At the same time that magical realism abounds in wonders, these narratives do not only treat the supernatural as wondrous, they also convey as marvelous the natural and mundane. The most often-cited example of this is the seemingly astonishing arrival of ice in the Macondo of García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, but we find examples in West African magical realism too. One memorable instance derives from Okri’s *The Famished Road*, just after Azaro has just nearly died as a result of following a spirit into the spirit world:

The world was new to me, everything was fresh ... I marveled at cobwebs and cockroaches. I couldn’t stop staring at people’s faces and their eyes. The fact that human beings talked, laughed, wept, sweated, sang, without some visible thing which made all the animation possible, the fact that they were alive in their bodies, contained this thing called life in their flesh, seemed incredible to me ... I hugged the alarming mystery of reality, and grew stronger.

(Okri 1991: 342)

This example is striking because Azaro is marveling at “the alarming mystery of reality,” an example of wonder at the mundane, following on the heels of a magical event. In putting these two wondrous events on equal footing, Okri seems to be probing, which is more wondrous?

Here, then, we arrive at one distinctive feature of magical realism. These narratives defamiliarize the mundane as often as they shock readers in their depictions of the extraordinary, a characteristic Amaryll Chanady describes structurally as the mode’s “fusion” of the natural and supernatural planes, or its putting of these two levels of reality on the same level (1985: 36). Christopher Warnes defines magical realism as

a narrative mode that “naturalizes the supernatural” (2005). Yet, the inverse is also true: magical realism super-naturalizes the natural, or depicts the mundane as wondrous. This common treatment of both the natural and supernatural as wondrous distinguishes magical realism from the wonder genre we know as the fairy tale. To illustrate this distinction, we might consider Jan Ziolkowski’s explanation of magic’s function in fairy tales: “Wonder is the effect [fairy] tales seek to achieve, while magic is the means that they employ to attain this goal” (2006: 5). However, with magical realism, wonder is the effect these tales seek to achieve, and magic *and realism* are the means that they employ to attain this goal.

Just as traditions entailed in practices of orality help to make sense of West African magical realism’s intermixture of tale types/motifs in its wonder poetics, West African magical realism’s treatment of the mundane as wondrous gains deeper resonance when considered within a localized epistemological framework, a way of knowing and making sense of the world that entails the confluence of the natural and supernatural. Garuba explains this kind of interrelatedness in magical realism as a literary representational outworking of animism. African magical realism, he argues, utilizes an “animist logic,” an idea he extrapolates from an animist worldview: “The ‘locking’ of spirit within matter or the merger of the material and the metaphorical, which animist logic entails, then appears to be reproduced in the cultural practices of society,” including its magical realism (Garuba 2003: 267). Moreover, Garuba argues that an animist logic drives transnational magical realisms: “There can be little or no doubt that the animist worldview presents writers such as Ben Okri, García Márquez, and Rushdie with the techniques and strategies to construct a narrative universe in which transpositions and transgressions of boundaries and identities predominate” (2003: 271). While up for debate, Garuba’s argument illustrates what is to his mind the centrality of an “animist logic” within magical realism, explaining why he later positions magical realism as a “subspecies” of animist realism (2003: 275).

Mark Mathuray similarly conveys animism as a “porousness” of numerous ostensible binaries, but he explains this central feature through recourse to recent theories that combine animism with naturism to include “the natural and the supernatural, the animate and the inanimate, the dead and the living ... nature itself seems to be charged with animate forces” (2009: 13). Mathuray wants to limit the extent animism is used to interpret African literature, preferring instead what he sees as the more inclusive idea of the sacred, since, he points out, Soyinka himself “has qualified the animistic view of traditional African religion by suggesting that it represents only one half of its ontological apparatus,” the other entailing “danger, forms of pollution, loss of subjectivity, radical discontinuity and ... liminality” (Mathuray 2009: 13). We find both sides of Soyinka’s coin in West African magical realism. “Danger, forms of pollution, loss of subjectivity, radical discontinuity and ... liminality” poignantly describes Jessamy’s tragic experience with the malevolent TillyTilly in Oyeyemi’s *The Icarus Girl*. And, animism offers one philosophical explanation for West African magical realism’s characteristic move of fusing the mundane and the magical. Within an animistic framework, the material world is not separate from the immaterial; instead, there is “a spiritual vitality lying behind all natural objects” as Quayson defines animism (1997: 148). If Azaro’s wonderment, quoted above, represents magical realism’s fusing of the mundane and the supernatural, animism

offers one localized explanation for it, a point that becomes more pronounced when we (re)view that passage from this lens:

the fact that human beings talked, laughed, wept, sweated, sang, *without some visible thing which made all the animation possible*, the fact that they were alive in their bodies, contained this thing called *life in their flesh* ... seemed incredible to me.

(Okri 1991: 342 emphasis added)

Besides showing the interrelatedness of the material and immaterial worlds, West African magical realism frequently depicts interaction among the dead and the living, what Coker has described as “the great coalescence between life and death, between the past and the present” (1990: 10–11). A striking example occurs in Oyeyemi’s *Mr. Fox*, when the character Reynardine, a name Oyeyemi derives from the werefox of European folklore, channels the ancestors of Brown, a Yoruba woman, so that the voices of Brown’s ancestors speak from Reynardine’s very lips, instructing Brown to tell their stories. In Coker’s *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar*, Sebastian Cromantine’s father guides him to the West African coastal settlement Malagueta. Sebastian realizes he has not cared well for his father and the town’s other deceased, so he holds a feast for them (Coker 1990: 143, 146). The nefarious Englishman, Captain David Hammerstone, arrives on the very day of the feast to establish an English garrison, creating a significant character juxtaposition insofar as Sebastian is holding a libation to care for his deceased father whereas Hammerstone is a derelict father. During the showdown that ensues, the spirit of the deceased Fatmatta appears to protect the Malaguetans from the English (Coker 1990: 153–7).

This latter example raises what may be another significant correlation between many postcolonial magical realisms and the wonder tale, as typically conceived: namely, in both wonder functions in relation to the ultimate victory of the underdog who, though oppressed and disadvantaged, stands in the moral right. As Zipes explains this feature in the wonder tale:

those who are naïve and simple are able to succeed because they are untainted, naturally good, and can recognize the wondrous signs. They have retained their belief in the miraculous condition of nature, revere nature in all its aspects, and accept their own natural inclinations. They have not been spoiled by conventionalism, power, or rationalism. In contrast to the humble characters, the villains are those who use words and power intentionally to exploit, control, transfix, incarcerate, and destroy for their own benefit.

(Zipes 2006: 51)

Fatmatta’s spirit fights on behalf of the settlers/former slaves who, unlike the colonizers, are seeking to care for their family line, and become the victors. The morally right, yet oppressed characters thus become the victors, and thereby offer the same kind of wonder and “hope for change” that Zipes places at the heart of the wonder tale and its enduring appeal.

The motif of the ancestors is part of the larger trend in West African magical realism in which authors represent the crossings between spirit and human worlds.

We find this feature in Tutuola's works, wherein the travel between secular and sacred spaces – the towns and the bush – bring characters into contact with often grotesque spirits. The central protagonists of Okri's *The Famished Road* as well as Oyejemi's *The Icarus Girl* are abiku, or spirit-children, the latter being liminal figures who cycle between the world of the spirits and that of human beings.

The trickster figures in Oyejemi's *Boy, Snow, Bird* and Laing's *Woman of the Aeroplanes* signal a tradition in which tricksters negotiate between boundaries, thus leading Robert Pelton to refer to the West African trickster's "slipperiness" (1980: 2). Pelton elaborates:

Ananse has become synonymous with everything amazing for deeper reasons [than his gall and tricks]. Somehow, his slipperiness fulfills the nation's need for healthy commerce between what is above and what is below, between male and female, between apparent and hidden order.

(1980: 2)

Laing's writing style itself reflects this function of the trickster, according to Deandrea, who describes it as being "opposed to a more general separation of holy and comic" (Deandrea 1999: 220)

Earlier, I quoted Arellano, who suggests magical realism as a genre is "oriented" towards "secular wonder." While, as I mentioned then, I affirm Arellano – this narrative mode *is* inclined towards wonder – an analysis of West African magical realism's wonder poetics requires us to modify Arellano's description: West African magical realism entails both sacred and secular forms of wonder, wonder pertaining to this world and its human/natural entities as well as the numinous, mysterious, transcendent, spiritual, supra-natural, and the divine, the latter being inextricably intertwined with the former.

WONDER AND/AS EPISTEMOLOGY

Wonder and epistemology have been twin ideas. Arellano notes that "traditionally wonder has been measured chiefly in relation to the production of knowledge, depicted either as an aid to or as a distraction from normative cognitive and epistemological processes" (2015: 4). In Western civilization, this relationship can be traced back to Socrates's *Theaetetus*, in which wonder becomes the starting point for philosophy, through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when wonder is linked to curiosity and scientific discovery (Arellano 2015: 4, 7). In colonial situations, wonder has been associated by scholars with "the epistemological conquests of modernity" (Arellano 2015: 15).

But, this is not the only way wonder has been affiliated with epistemology. Using a theological lens, Nava has surfaced a starkly different kind of knowing, "wonder as a form of absence in the order of knowledge":

Wonder is defined by an encounter with something we do not and cannot fully understand, or by a recognition, and here I am following Stephen Greenblatt, that our grasp of the world is always incomplete and indeterminate. Wonder

marks the radical otherness and impenetrability of a given phenomenon, the ineradicable mystery at the heart of all human knowledge.

(2013: 8)

Nava is describing limits to human understanding and knowledge, aspects that exceed knowing and remain mysterious.

West African magical realism's wonder poetics also entail ways of knowing and being in the world in its continuation of traditions of tale-telling and in its "animistic logic," and these epistemes too are alternatives to the tale Arellano tells about wonder's colonial history. I will call upon Soyinka again to help draw out how. Soyinka describes the Yoruba worldview as "an acceptance of *the elastic nature of knowledge* as its only reality, as signifying no more than reflections of the original coming-into-being of *a manifestly complex reality*" (Soyinka 2000: 53, emphasis added). We can extrapolate from this a description of West African magical realism's wonder poetics. The latter's indiscriminate use of tales, tale types, and motifs reflects elasticity and complexity, as does the animistic interpenetration of spiritual/material, living/dead, and spirit/human worlds. This kind of knowing, pointing as it does to an always incomplete understanding, also circles back to Nava's theologically-derived wonder as "absence in ... knowledge," "an encounter" with what we "cannot fully understand," and "mystery at the heart of human knowledge" (2013: 8).

In her own work on the relationships between indigenous ways of knowing and wonder genres, including the fairy tale, Bacchilega urges scholars to take seriously "our responsibility and privilege to attend to [an] insistent and emerging poetics and politics of wonder" (2013: 14). One way to do so, she offers, is by "pursuing a conversation between indigenous, fairy-tale, and other studies of the fantastic" (Bacchilega 2016). In my bringing together wonder genres with magical realism and African ways of knowing, I hope to be responding in some small way to her call.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FRANCOPHONE FAIRY TALES IN WEST AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Colonizing and reclaiming tradition



Lewis C. Seifert

There are many differences between the folk and fairy tales in French from West Africa and the Caribbean. And this is hardly surprising given the language, history, and culture (not to mention the Atlantic Ocean) that separate the peoples of former colonies on the African continent and those in the Caribbean. But these differences, which I will consider in this essay, should not obscure a key fact these folk and fairy tales share, namely their origin in French colonial violence and its aftermath. Quite simply – and very importantly – the Francophone fairy tales of West Africa and the Caribbean owe their existence to the colonial presence of France in these regions of the world, a presence that allowed for the translation and adaptation into French of storytelling traditions from West African languages and Caribbean Creoles. These folk and fairy tales are inseparable from the European (and specifically French) colonial encounter, and that fact should give us pause. Without that encounter and its violence, the West African tales in French would not exist (although the oral storytelling traditions in its various languages most certainly would); and without it, neither the French translations/adaptations nor the Creole storytelling traditions of the French Caribbean would exist (since it was the forced migration and enslavement of Africans that gave rise to Creole storytelling in the first place). What the Francophone African and Caribbean folk and fairy tales owe to French colonialism is also important because it reminds us to consider the motivations *for* and the consequences *of* the putting into writing (that is, into *French* writing) oral storytelling by colonized peoples. In her study of folktale collections of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British Empire, Sadhana Naithani (2010) has shown how colonial ideology pervades every aspect of these collections, from transcription to translation to publication, but also how political commitments of collectors differ, often considerably (for and against colonial powers). What Naithani has asserted about British colonial folktale collections is broadly applicable to comparable French collections: a consideration of colonial ideology is certainly necessary for any study of these folk and fairy tales, and the motivations of collectors and writers are diverse and anything but monolithic. But if it is essential to acknowledge the origins of Francophone West African and Caribbean folk and fairy tales in colonial violence, it is just as important to recognize the ways these tales invite us

to reflect critically on that violence, even as they give us a glimpse – no matter how mediated and transformed – of the creative and imaginative powers in the storytelling by colonized peoples.

To be sure, other regions where France had a colonial presence have seen the appearance of folk and fairy tales in French (North Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion, among others). However, the folk and fairy tales in French of West Africa and the Caribbean can usefully be considered together, in spite of the undeniable differences between them, because of the historical and cultural links they share. Beginning in the seventeenth century, French interest in West Africa began in earnest as it developed plantation colonies, with slaves, in the Caribbean (Miller 2007). The West African captives who made the Middle Passage destined for slavery in French colonies of the Caribbean brought with them storytelling traditions that made their way, albeit transformed, into Creole oral traditions. Even if the oral traditions on either side of the Atlantic inevitably diverged (for reasons I will discuss later), this storytelling link more than justifies considering these two regional traditions together. Yet another compelling reason concerns the ties between Africa and the Caribbean centering on a recognition of the shared experience and resistance to colonialism, as is evident in *négritude*, a political and aesthetic movement that affirmed the cultural unity and values of peoples of African descent. The founders of this movement hailed from both sides of the Atlantic: the Martinican Aimé Césaire, the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor, and the Guyanese Léon-Gontran Damas. Valorizing the cultural contributions of the African diaspora as it did, *négritude* gave new impetus to the translation and adaptation of oral storytelling both in Africa and the Caribbean. For historical, political, and cultural reasons, then, comparing and contrasting the Francophone folk and fairy tales of these two regions is a compelling exercise that broadens and complicates our understanding of the wonder tale as a global and intercultural phenomenon.

But referring to the oral storytelling genres of West Africa and the Caribbean translated into French as “fairy tales” is not without problems. As Andrew Teverson makes clear in his introduction to this volume, the term “fairy tale” in particular is freighted with Eurocentric and Western associations that threaten to obscure the specificity, variety, and function of oral storytelling genres adapted into French that I am considering in this essay. What Western readers think of as a “fairy tale” certainly has counterparts in West Africa and the Caribbean, usually short narratives with characters devoid of psychological depth who exist within a world governed by magic or wonder. But the cast of characters and the settings for their actions extend beyond those typical of classic Western fairy tales, and not surprisingly both the characters and the settings reflect the local historical and cultural realities of West Africa and the Caribbean. Not all of the narratives feature wonder or magic per se, even if they do include improbable and unrealistic situations. The French term *conte*, with no precise parallel in English (it can be translated variously as “short story,” “story,” “tale,” “folktale,” or “fairy tale”) and only partially equivalent to the German *Märchen*, is in many respects better suited than “fairy tale.” This said, however unsatisfactory, the English expression “folk and fairy tales” (abbreviated from here on as FFTs) gives a better sense than “fairy tale” alone of the variety of narratives from West Africa and the Caribbean that have been translated and/or adapted into French.

WEST AFRICA

The Francophone FFTs of West Africa include storytelling traditions from many different ethnic and linguistic groups hailing from present-day Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Consequently, to speak of the FFTs of West Africa as a single category is to risk glossing over important differences that are at least implicitly recognized by the way numerous anthologies are organized according to national or ethnic origin. Yet such differences have not stopped scholars from attempting to define the “African folktale” as a category with its own specificity, distinct from folktales of other parts of the world. But what inheres in that category is a matter of much discussion and little general consensus. For instance, noted anthropologist Ruth Finnegan divides African oral narratives into “stories about people,” “myths of origins,” and “animal stories” (2012: 327–78) whereas Amadou Hampâté Bâ avoids such sub-categories and considers all African oral storytelling genres to be “contes initiatiques” (stories of initiation) (2009: 206–7). For her part, Denise Paulme observes that it is difficult to establish strict distinctions between subcategories of African oral narratives because they often overlap (e.g. stories with animals can include magical elements, making it problematic to separate animal tales from magic tales) (1976: 19). Of course, the challenges scholars have faced establishing subcategories of oral narratives from Africa obtain in the study of oral traditions from other parts of the world as well. But these challenges are compounded by the ethnic diversity of the region.

Still, in spite of the variety and complexity of African oral traditions, there are a number of indisputable facts about the West African FFTs in French. First, these narratives are of varying length: they are usually short (a few pages in written form), but others can be more properly understood to be myths or epics (e.g. Hampâté Bâ, *Contes initiatiques peuls*). Second, although griots (traditionally, hereditary musician-poets who preserve the history of a prominent family) do tell these stories, they are more often told by other storytellers, both men and women. Third, these narratives feature human and/or animal characters in settings with and without elements of magic. Fourth, there is little discernible trace of direct European influence on storytelling traditions due to the French colonial presence (unlike the situation in the Caribbean, as we will see). Setting aside for the moment the very real impact of French colonial folkloristics, there are indeed narratives with tale-types that are also found in Europe (e.g. Birago Diop’s “Les Mamelles” and Hampâté Bâ’s “La coépouse bossue,” versions of ATU 480 “The Kind and the Unkind Girls,” which unfold in a polygamous household with two wives, one gracious and the other cantankerous). Fifth, more prominent than a Western European influence is that of the *Arabian Nights*, stemming from the Islamization of West Africa beginning in the tenth century CE. Both story plots and characters (such as djinns) from the *Arabian Nights* are found in the oral narratives and the Francophone FFTs of West Africa (Paulme 1976: 15–16). Sixth, as previously mentioned, many of the West African plots are also found in the Caribbean (as well as Louisiana and not to mention the Anglophone African–American tradition), notably animal tales such as those with a trickster rabbit (called Leuk in Senegal), Bouki the hyena, and Anansè (aka Anansi) the spider. Seventh, the world depicted in these folktales is most often an agrarian society of pre-colonial times. Not unlike folktales from many other parts of the world, the characters do

not set out to upend the social structures they confront but rather, with cunning, to manipulate them to their advantage. And finally, more clearly than in European folktales, magic in African folktales has a clear basis in traditional religious beliefs and customs, most notably animism (Kesteloot and Mbodj 1983: 13–14).

Efforts to adapt West African oral traditions into French began in the early days of French colonial rule. In 1828, the first civilian administrator of Senegal, Baron Jacques-François Roger published his *Fables sénégalaises; recueillies de l'ouolof; et mises en vers français; avec des notes destinées à faire connaître la Séné-Gambie, son climat, ses principales productions, la civilisation et les mœurs des habitants*. What he characterizes as “fables” include animal tales and stories with human characters he collected, along with narratives of his own invention highlighting customs of Senegal. As his title makes clear, Roger envisions the collection as a proto-anthropological text for French readers of the metropole, and accordingly each “fable” is followed by copious notes. His adaptations into French verse undeniably transform and deform the African oral narratives they purport to preserve (most notably by rendering them as verse fables following the model of Jean de La Fontaine), but Roger displays a remarkable degree of self-awareness – even more than that of many later collectors – and a detailed knowledge of West Africa and Wolof language and culture. While emphasizing his faithfulness to the stories collected, he nonetheless acknowledges changes: “Je n’ai rien négligé pour me tenir constamment très-près de l’original; cependant il ne faut pas attendre à cet égard une imitation servile” (“I have made every effort to remain always as close as possible to the original; yet one should not expect a servile imitation in this regard”) (24). A forerunner of a long succession of attempts to preserve the oral storytelling in writing, Roger’s collection inaugurated an enduring tradition of French anthologies of African folktales. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as France’s colonial ambitions in West Africa gained in intensity, other French colonial administrators continued in Roger’s footsteps, inspired directly or indirectly by European folkloristics. Many of the resulting works, such as Béranger-Féraud’s 1885 *Recueil de contes populaires de la Séné-gambie*, freely adapt into French prose wonder tales collected from unspecified indigenous storytellers. More rigorous and influential was François-Victor Equilbecq’s 1913 *Contes indigènes de l’Ouest-Africain français*, which arranged folk genres by categories (cosmological legends, stories of natural history, fictional narratives, didactic tales, “fables” [i.e. animal tales], bawdy tales, and *devinettes*) and carefully indicated both the name of the storyteller and the geographic origin for each story (187–92). Equilbecq precedes his collection with a long “Essai sur la littérature merveilleuse des noirs” in which he examines both similarities and differences between West African and European folklores and, not unlike Ruth Finnegan, argues that African oral traditions be understood as “literature.” His contention that *le merveilleux* (the marvelous or wonder) of West African folktales had a basis in religious belief and practice was to be confirmed with greater specificity by later folklorists (Kesteloot and Mbodj 1983: 14–17).

The French colonial collections both complicate and confirm nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of racial difference. They all begin with the premise that African folktales defy European preconceptions about the peoples of the continent. “Quand on entreprend d’étudier les productions de l’esprit chez les nègres, on est disposé à penser tout d’abord qu’on ne trouvera rien d’intéressant ... Cette idée préconçue est fausse cependant” (Béranger-Féraud 1885: i) (“When one undertakes

the study of the imaginative creations among the blacks, one is inclined to think at first that one will find nothing interesting ... This preconceived idea is false, however"). At bottom, the appeal of African folklore derives from its similarity to other traditions. As Equilbecq puts it, "le fond des récits et la façon dont ils sont traités les maintiennent au niveau des contes populaires indo-européens ou sémites, avec lesquels ces récits offrent d'ailleurs de manifestes ressemblances" (12) ("the content of the stories and the manner in which they are told put them on par with popular Indo-European or Semitic tales, with which these stories have evident similarities, moreover"). At the same time, though, these collections explicitly link their adaptations/translations to the French colonial project, working from the assumption that folktales provide a means of "knowing" the African Other, a precondition to colonial rule. Equilbecq states, baldly, that "[i]l faut connaître celui que l'on veut dominer, de façon à tirer parti tant de ses défauts que de ses qualités en vue du but que l'on se propose" (11) ("we must know the one we wish to dominate, so as to take advantage of his faults as much as his qualities in anticipation of the goal we propose for ourselves"). Ultimately, then, the French colonial anthologies of West African FFTs are marked by a profound tension between two conflicting claims: on the one hand, folktales often depict characters and plots recognizable to French readers and, on the other, they give a sense of what supposedly makes Africans different from other peoples, with characters and plots that are *unfamiliar*, and by that token fascinating to these same French readers. The tension between universality and particularity visible in these collections is of course central to folkloristics in this period and beyond. But the colonial imperative that motivates these collections exposes a fascination with West African oral traditions that is inextricably intertwined with a deep-rooted racism.

After World War II, much different motivations prevailed in the ethnographic fieldwork of French and African scholars and the literary works of Francophone African writers. Both ethnographers and writers were driven by a desire to preserve oral traditions made vulnerable because of the forces of modernization unleashed by the European colonial presence. Even before this period, the iconoclastic modernist writer Blaise Cendrars published his *Anthologie nègre* (1921 [2002]), a compilation of African folktales from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English, French, and German colonial sources that seeks to celebrate the variety and richness of the continent's languages and cultures. Cendrars' anthology is often cited as inspiration for West African writers who, in the years leading up to and immediately following decolonization, collected and adapted folklore as an expression of their own cultural heritage. *Négritude*, a broad philosophical and political movement that denounced colonial oppression while valorizing a collective identity and culture for Africans and the African diaspora, reflected or paralleled the interests of writers such as Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Bernard Dadié, Birago Diop, Abdoulaye Sadj, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Ousmane Socé. Emphasizing the contributions to global human civilization by Africans and peoples of African descent, *négritude* at least implicitly relies on oral traditions. Senghor and Sadj make this clear in the preface to their textbook novel *La belle histoire de Leuk-le-lièvre* (1953) when they state their aim to depict the "vie profonde du Nègre-Africain" ("the inner life of the Black-African") which they claim is expressed through "mythes, légendes, contes, fables, proverbes et devinettes" (4). These FFTs also enact *négritude*'s central objective of making African history

and culture visible to the world beyond the African continent. Writing in French, Bâ, Dadié, Diop, Sadji, Senghor, and Socé all address multiple audiences – not only the minority of West Africans literate in French, but also (and perhaps especially) Francophone readers beyond Africa. Unlike the many collections by ethnographers, though, the works by these writers do not attempt to reproduce markers of oral storytelling, but rather freely adapt both the form and in many instances the plots of their FFTs. Even Bâ, a noted ethnographer who worked with UNESCO, did not limit himself to transcriptions of the oral narratives he transposed into French and takes liberties with style and content (although he includes copious linguistic and cultural notes aimed at readers unfamiliar with traditional African cultures). Also unlike ethnographic collections, which often organize narratives by genre or by theme, these writers usually include an assortment of animal, magic, and realistic tales. Most striking, however, is the narrative voice employed by West African Francophone writers, who recognize the impossibility of capturing oral storytelling in writing even as they craft texts that celebrate and rework that storytelling. As Diop says, referring to the stories of his grandmother and his family's griot:

j'ai voulu, tisserand malhabile, avec une navette hésitante, confectionner quelques bandes pour coudre un pagne sur lequel grand-mère, si elle revenait, aurait retrouvé le coton qu'elle fila la première; et où Amadou Koumba reconnaîtra, beaucoup moins vifs sans doute, les coloris des belles étoffes qu'il tissa pour moi naguère.

(1960: 12)

(A clumsy weaver, I wanted to craft a few bands with a hesitant loom so as to sew a loincloth on which grandmother, were she to return, would find the cotton she was the first to spin; and where Amadou Koumba will recognize the doubtless much less vivid colors of the beautiful cloth he once wove for me.)

Most, if not all, of these texts have become classics in Francophone African literature, yet few more contemporary writers have pursued their example by adapting West African oral narratives in texts for an adult readership. There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. It may be that FFTs have become so associated with the period before and immediately after decolonization (in the 1950s and 1960s) that subsequent periods have preferred to move on to other genres and forms. But also relevant is the indifference or even hostility toward oral tradition among some West African elites who view it as a nostalgic obstacle to confronting contemporary global realities (Miller 1990: 22, 71). At a time when Africa, like much of the developing world, continues to adapt (to) political and economic modernity, Francophone African writers seem to view adapting traditional stories as irrelevant, at least for the moment.

But even if contemporary Francophone African writers have been less inclined to rework FFTs for adults, adaptations explicitly aimed at children, often in the form of anthologies organized by region or country, have continued to appear – in print, online, and in film. Alongside these, the FFTs of Dadié, Diop, and Senghor/Sadji have a consecrated place in the French curricula for West African schoolchildren. And in the realm of film, the fairy-tale animation of Michel Ocelot features several African characters and settings. In addition to shorts in *Les Contes de la nuit* (1992), *Princes et Princesses* (2000), and *Dragons et Princesses* (2010), Ocelot's

widely celebrated Kirikou films (*Kirikou et la sorcière*, 1998; and *Kirikou et les bêtes sauvages*, 2005) reflect his interest in African folktales. The Kirikou character is based on a figure known as the “African Thumbling” (see Paulme 1976), and Ocelot cites a story recorded by Equilbecq as one of his inspirations (Tinet n.d.). Released globally, Ocelot’s Kirikou films bring his adaptation of an African folktale to a wider audience than that of any of the Francophone African writers. But Ocelot’s relation to African folklore is not without ambiguities that beset the Francophone African wonder tale more generally. That it was a Frenchman, Ocelot, and not an African who brought these adaptations of African folktales to the global film audience reveals what has and has not changed since the heyday of the French Empire. As a Western European cinematographer, Ocelot has had access to resources unavailable to many African filmmakers. And so, Ocelot’s films demonstrate a broader truth: The Francophone African FFT still depends on the former colonizer for its very existence.

THE CARIBBEAN

The written FFTs of the Francophone Caribbean derive from the oral storytelling traditions of the French possessions in the Lesser Antilles (Guadeloupe and Martinique [DOM, or overseas *départements*]; Saint Martin and Saint Barthélemy [TOM, or overseas territories]) and Guiana (a DOM) on the South American mainland, as well as Haiti (which gained its independence from France in 1804) and the independent islands of Dominica and Saint Lucia. Although there are important continuities between the West African and the Caribbean traditions, the latter emerge from the Creole languages and cultures that were forged from the seventeenth century on. Faced with the necessity of interacting and communicating amongst themselves, French colonizers, West African slaves, and to a lesser extent Amerindians (Arawaks and Caribs) created Creoles, languages formed from mixtures of other languages in a relatively short period of time. As the French colonial plantation system expanded and flourished, Creole increasingly became the primary language of the ever growing population of slaves of African descent (while French became the preferred language of European colonists), and the oral traditions subsequently collected and adapted were those of the descendants of slaves. Creole storytelling, like Creole languages, reflects diverse origins: European, African, Amerindian, even Indian (owing to nineteenth-century immigration). As such, it is witness to the cultural exchanges and borrowings that occurred in spite of the extermination of Amerindians and the enslavement of Africans at the hands of French colonizers. Plots that are clearly of European origin (e.g. “La Bête à sept têtes”) exist alongside others that are of distinct African provenance, particularly stories of animals with trickster rabbits and spiders, but also animals that do not exist in the Caribbean, such as hyenas, elephants, lions, and tigers. But even narratives that can be traced to European and African traditions are transformed by their migration to the Caribbean. References to the natural world (plants, animals, topography) clearly situate these tales in the Caribbean. But, so does the representation of social structures formed by slavery and its aftermath. These are particularly visible in the narratives from Guadeloupe and Martinique, where a white European minority continued to dominate economic life after the abolition of slavery in French territories in 1848. Ti-Jean, a prominent figure in Antillean folktales, frequently appears in stories where he outwits his godfather, a white landowner, cheating

him of his wealth and, in some versions, sending him to his death. Misery and the cunning required to overcome it are a constant topos of Creole folktales, as scholars have noted (Condé 2014). Further distinguishing Caribbean Creole narratives is the depiction of religious beliefs, with frequent characters of Christian origin (Bondieu, Diable, etc.) and, in Haitian folklore especially, plots involving voodoo. More generally, these storytelling traditions result from cultural creolization, which Lee Haring describes as a process of “cultural renegotiation” (2003: 19) involving multiple techniques, both linguistic and referential (e.g. language-mixing, parody, and quotation). As a result, stories that may be more or less recognizable as African and/or European incorporate layers of metanarrative commentary directed toward the source narratives and their local audiences.

The collection and adaptation of oral traditions in the Francophone Caribbean was not the result of efforts by French colonizers, as in West Africa, but rather by outsiders and, eventually, by Antillean and Haitian scholars themselves. Some of the earliest written transcriptions of oral storytelling are due to Lafcadio Hearn, an immigrant to the US who spent several years in the 1880s traveling in the French Antilles before eventually making his way to Japan where he spent the rest of his life. Besides descriptions of tales in his travel narratives (*Two Years in the French West Indies*, 1890 [1903]), he transcribed Creole folktales that were posthumously translated and published in French (*Contes des Tropiques*, 1926; and *Trois fois bel conte*, 1939 [1978]). Aimé Césaire praises Hearn’s understanding of the realities depicted in Creole folktales (Césaire 1942: 7–8) even if his views on race were more complex than Césaire avers (Corzani 1990). But by far the most complete collection of Caribbean folktales was compiled by Elsie Clews Parsons, an American folklorist who traveled from island to island in the 1920s, recording folktales and proverbs. Her three-volume *Folk-lore of the Antilles, French and English* (1933) remains the most extensive collection of Caribbean folklore available, with phonetic transcriptions of dialectal English and French Creole. Parsons presents her collection as a contribution to the understanding of links between Africans, black Caribbeans, and African-Americans. But her collection is especially valuable for the comparisons it allows among folktales and proverbs of the entire Caribbean, notwithstanding linguistic differences.

After Hearn and Parsons, though, much of the collecting and adapting FFTs has been done by scholars and writers from the Francophone Caribbean, generally focusing on specific regions: Haiti, the Lesser Antilles (especially Guadeloupe and Martinique), and Guiana. Collections of Haitian folklore date to the late nineteenth century, but the most extensive began in the 1930s with the work of Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, who published widely in Haiti, France, and the United States. A linguist and ethnologist, Comhaire-Sylvain went on to do comparative work between African and Haitian oral traditions. Comhaire-Sylvain’s collections (and those of many others) is inspired by Jean Price-Mars’ *Ainsi parla l’oncle* (1927 [2009]), which underscores the cultural significance of a wide range of Haitian traditions.

During World War II, Aimé Césaire and Léon-Gontran Damas, hailing from Martinique and Guiana respectively, each individually emphasized the political dimensions of Creole storytelling. In 1942, Césaire, with René Ménénil, penned an essay in their surrealist-inspired journal *Tropiques*, “Introduction au folklore martiniquais,” that uses folklore as a means of understanding slavery and colonialism in the Antilles. Césaire and Ménénil are particularly drawn to the way slaves and

descendants of slaves use wonder (*le merveilleux*) to confront their reality: “Quand l’homme écrasé par une société inique cherche en vain autour de lui le grand secours, découragé, impuissant, il projette sa misère et sa révolte dans un ciel de promesse et de dynamite” (1942: 8) (“When man, oppressed by an unjust society, looks in vain around himself for the ultimate assistance, discouraged, powerless, he projects his misery and his revolt onto a sky of promise and of dynamite”). Césaire and Ménil depict *le merveilleux* as a form of struggle against the real, an “image of absolute freedom” (Ménil 1941: 13). This understanding explains their interest in the Creole folktale, which figures prominently in *Tropiques*. During the same wartime period, Damas published *Veillées noires* (1943 [1972]), a compilation of Creole folktales he had collected in his native Guiana and freely adapted into French. In a gesture that subsequent Francophone Caribbean writers will emulate, Damas’ narrator fuses omniscient third-person narration with the voice of a traditional storyteller. And similar to *Tropiques*, *Veillées noires* projects political messages, particularly through the focus on scarcity and race relations.

In the post-World War II era, even as Guadeloupe and Martinique became official regions of France (DOM), FFTs contributed to the growing consciousness of Caribbean linguistic and cultural specificity. Anthologies of folktales adapted into French continue to appear, notably Thérèse Georgel’s *Contes et légendes des Antilles* (1957), which includes historical anecdotes and legends alongside adaptations of folktales from across the Caribbean. More significantly, though, bilingual anthologies parallel a movement to resist French assimilation by cultivating both Creole culture and the Creole language. Collections by Ina Césaire (the daughter of Aimé) and Marie-Thérèse Lung-Fou, for example, apply rigorous ethnographic and linguistic standards while addressing multiple reading publics (Francophone and Creolophone). These anthologies offer a glimpse of the rich variety of Creole folktales: tales of witchcraft, erotic tales, animal tales, trickster tales, comic tales, among others. In the same period, writers from the Antilles adapted plots with folkloric characters in plays (Patrick Chamoiseau, *Manman Dlo contre la fée Carabosse*, 1982) and novels (Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Ti-Jean*, 1979).

Folktales have been of particular interest to a group of writers who developed *créolité* (creoleness), a dialectical reworking of *négritude* that affirms the specificity of Creole cultures, celebrates their hybridity, and advocates for their political autonomy. Both Raphaël Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau, who (with Jean Bernabé) wrote the manifesto *Éloge de la créolité* (1989), see in the Creole folktale a vibrant expression of Creole identity and a rich source for contemporary Caribbean writing. In addition to his own adaptations of Creole folktales from across the Caribbean (*Contes créoles des Amériques*, 1995), Confiant has supported the work of “Kontè Sanblé,” an association that promotes oral storytelling in Martinique. For Chamoiseau, who frequently evokes the traditional Creole storyteller both in his fiction and his essays, the *conteur* is a model for contemporary Caribbean writers:

l’écrivain créole doit tenter de devenir (comme le conteur originel) un homme seul, debout dans la nuit, solidaire d’un cercle d’âmes écrasées ... qui attendent de lui l’émerveillement, l’oubli, la distraction, le rire, l’espoir, l’excitation, la clé des résistances et des survies.

(157)

(the Creole writer must attempt to become [like the traditional storyteller] a man alone, standing in the night, united with a circle of overburdened souls ... who expect from him amazement, forgetting, distraction, laughter, hope, excitement, the key to resistances and survivals.)

Like Confiant, Chamoiseau has also adapted Creole folktales (*Au temps de l'antan: contes du pays Martinique*, 1988 [1989]; and *Émerveillements*, 1998), asserting a self-conscious narrative voice that appropriates techniques of a traditional Creole storyteller and employs a complex style that combines Creole words, regional Antillean French, and neologisms. This experimentation in Chamoiseau's writing is part and parcel of a conception of the wonder tale as both recollection of a colonial past and imagining of a Creole future.

As traditional oral storytelling recedes across West Africa and the Caribbean, literary fairy tales preserve the memory of West African and Creole folktales. But these written adaptations also – and necessarily – transform traditional oral folktales, not only because they move from orality to writing, but also because they are translated into French. In most cases, what were primarily oral narratives are now more readily available in writing and in French than they are in the languages in which they were originally told and collected. Of course, it is no small irony that the language of the former colonizer is now the language in which these FFTs are most frequently heard, told, and read. It is certainly possible to interpret this irony as an instance of continued colonial violence. And to the extent that oral folktales in African languages and Creole ultimately disappear, French colonialism will indeed bear much of the blame. But something quite different is at work in the literary adaptations by Francophone writers from former French colonies. Their versions are responses to colonial violence that reclaim cultural traditions and affirm a difference for reading publics both in and beyond France. Placing these FFTs in the context of wonder tales from across the world and translating them into other languages are the next steps in honoring and reworking these traditions.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THIS IS NOT A FAIRY TALE

Anansi and the web of narrative power



Emily Zobel Marshall

INTRODUCTION

Anansi, the anarchic trickster spider of West African origin, has woven an intricate web of tales across the African diaspora. Continually adapted to the needs of the society that tells his tales, Anansi has become symbolic of the traumas of enslavement and the resilience of the enslaved, the cultural fusions of the postcolonial Caribbean and the migrations of its people (see Levine 1977: 90; Zobel Marshall 2012).

This chapter will begin by exploring the origins of Anansi before scrutinizing the classification of Anansi stories; can they be described as folk tales, myths or fairy tales and what are the implications of these classifications? It will move on to an overview of the ways in which Anansi tales were adapted to the Jamaican plantation environment before focusing on the literary adaptations of the stories in their contemporary context. The chapter will conclude by asking what changes Anansi has undergone in his journey into twenty-first century popular Caribbean cultural forms, such as dancehall, and examine representations of the trickster spider in Jamaican society and politics today.

ANANSI'S ORIGINS: THIS IS NOT A MYTH

From the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, Anansi was tightly bound to Asante political, religious and social life. Anansi did not hold a divine or god-like status amongst the Asante but his role was that of the mediator; a mediator in disputes between men and women and, on a wider scale, a mediator between humankind and Nyame, the Asante supreme deity (Pelton 1980: 65). As priest and Asante researcher Robert Pelton states, the Anansi stories “give word, eloquently and delightfully, to the Asante understanding of human life” (Pelton 1980: 61).

Among the Asante, Anansi was a folk hero who often tested the boundaries of acceptable behavior. He was a crossroads figure, existing between two worlds and acting as mediator or messenger between humankind and the Asante Supreme Being, Nyame. However, in Asante Anansi stories, at every opportunity Anansi wreaked havoc in the human world and undermined the omnipotent Nyame. Anansi's actions were often anti-social and destructive and he could invert all biological and social rules: he

could disconnect his own body parts, change his sex, abuse his guests and even eat his own children.

Anansi was a breaker of the rules and Anansi tales were used by the Asante to air problems and frustrations. A great king or corrupt headman could be criticized through the medium of an Anansi story, and criticism of these powerful figures would be unacceptable under any other circumstance (Rattray 1930: i). Even the all-powerful Nyame could be mocked and scorned. Because the Anansi tales portrayed a fantastical world in which the normal rules of society were turned on their head, they provided a medium through which the Asante could temporarily escape from their tightly structured social hierarchy. The tales provided a form of psychological release and as a result helped the Asante accept, rather than resist, the rules of their society. By testing the limitations of the Asante social and religious code, Anansi was able to strengthen social and religious order. Thus, while Anansi violated Nyame's rule, in doing so he reaffirmed it (Vecsey 1993: 119). Anansi was a part of a culture in a continual state of flux where binary oppositions were tested to strengthen the social structure. Just as there exists both a male and female god in traditional Asante religion, each with a share of divine power, "all Asante beliefs and institutions embody doubleness so that everyday life reveals an ultimate order" (Pelton 1980: 63).

Ghanaian scholar Kwesi Yankah argues that Akan Anansi tales are not Akan "myths" as many scholars have assumed, but rather fictional narratives with etiological features. Yankah conducted fieldwork in the Akan regions of Ghana in 1979, where he listened to and observed storytelling sessions and, when analysing the stories, drew from his first-hand experiences of the socio-cultural context in which they were told. Yankah defines myth as a belief narrative; a story which is "considered to be a truthful account of what happened in the remote past" (Yankah 1983: 1). He believes scholars have been too quick to categorize the Anansi tales as myths. They have been influenced, he argues, by the nineteenth-century Eurocentric assertion that animals must have a totemic significance amongst predominately illiterate African "tribes" – a stereotype created from the supposition that "primitive" peoples do not distinguish between themselves and animals (Yankah 1983: 13–14).

Anansi is used to explain certain cultural and natural phenomena in the Asante world, and unlike other folkloric figures he can both challenge and thwart the gods, yet, as Yankah argues, it is unlikely that any of the Asante groups believed that Anansi once existed. First, the tales end with a disclaimer from the storyteller explaining that the content of the tales is untrue. Second, there is no mention of Anansi as a divine figure in serious scholarly studies conducted on the religious beliefs of the Asante, including the seminal study by R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in the Ashanti* (1927). Third, unlike the elephant and certain species of antelope, the spider is not venerated amongst the Asante (Yankah 1983: 10). Furthermore, the tales are taught and read in Akan schools as folk tales, unlike Asante sacred texts which can only be enacted by a restricted class of specialists (Yankah 1983: 10).

Anansi stories are not Asante myths but vehicles through which the Asante could explain, scrutinise and question the world around them. They are also celebrations of the intricacies and beauty of language and the Asante delight in Anansi's use of tricky word-play and double-entendres to get the better of his adversaries (Yankah 1983: 11). For this reason, a spider design decorates the staffs of Asante royal spokesmen, otherwise known as court "linguists" (Yankah 1983: 11).

NO ‘HAPPILY EVER AFTER’: THIS IS NOT A FAIRY TALE

Folklore is often seen as a precursor to the fairy tale and the power dynamics of colonialism are at the very heart of the definition of the fairy tale. The fairy-tale genre is of North American and European origin and, as Cristina Bacchilega argues, in Eurocentric thinking fairy tales have been viewed as superior to the indigenous folk tale, which was often interpreted as “outmoded and simple” (Bacchilega 2013: 21). Folk tales, Bacchilega points out, are assumed to originate in the “collective” and are associated with a specific kind of ethnic, national and gendered group identity which, in Eurocentric thought, is subordinate to European culture:

As this generally accepted narrative goes, fairy tales develop out of folk tales by turning a staple of narrative sustenance into a chef’s signature dish, and the chef – no matter where the staple came from – could only be in the literate classes and, more specifically, the literate classes of Europe.

(Bacchilega 2013: 21)

According to Bacchilega, children in the west have long been believed to “progress” from listening to folk tales, which are the result of a “limited inventiveness,” to reading fairy tales, which are both artistic and imaginative and contain a “symbolic truth”:

Within this ethnocentric construction of magic, wonder, and enchantment, some peoples and some groups have imaginations that make art and reach for symbolic truth, and others have limited inventiveness that is hopelessly fantastic or obsolete and ultimately untrue.

(Bacchilega 2013: 21)

Since Europeans in the Caribbean started collecting trickster tales of African origin they have echoed these prejudiced distinctions between folktales and fairy tales. White collectors have been both fascinated by the trickster tales and fearful of their negative effect on white children. In 1892, Abigail Christiansen noted in her collection of American slave trickster tales that the trickster represents the “coloured man” and warned:

If we believe that the tales of our nurseries are as important factors in forming the characters of our children as the theological dogmas of maturer years, we of the New South cannot wish our children to pore long over these pages.

(Levine 1977: 113)

Englishman Walter Jekyll, who spent 34 years in Jamaica, explains that he made “slight changes” to his collections of Anansi tales because he “thought the volume might find its way to the nursery” (Jekyll 1966: liii). White collectors searched for the “moral” of the story, and finding none, concluded that the tales lacked morals as they were rooted in a more “primitive,” non-Christian culture – or that they reflected the moral deficiencies of the black “race.” Other collectors assumed that the products of such a “simple” culture could not attain the complexities of the moral tale.

Jamaican scholar Barry Chevannes argues that Anansi does not operate within a Christian framework with binary distinctions of morality. He states that one must suspend Christian values and moral and ethical judgments where Anansi is concerned and points out that:

Many Jamaicans don't think of Anansi as a sinful – in the same way we don't think of the man that pulls off the clever trick as sinful. You may take advantage of somebody else but you may say the person deserves to be taken advantage of.
(Chevannes 2005)

Jamaican folklorist Philip Sherlock also believes that a focus on Anansi's morality takes one away from a "real" understanding of the stories. The Anansi tales, he explains, are to be used as satirical weapons; through the medium of the tale the storyteller takes revenge on those who have wronged or offended him and raises a laugh at their negative character traits:

Ridicule is a powerful weapon – those that think the Anansi story is immoral and should not be told are missing the point. "Let us" says the wronged man, "enter the world of make believe. Let us pretend. We will not use real names." In this way the story often becomes a vehicle for satire.

(Cited in Bennett 1944: 12–13)

What Sherlock overlooks here, however, is the ways in which the tales moved from the world of make-believe to inspiring everyday strategies of resistance and survival on the Jamaican plantations. Throughout my research on the Anansi tales, I have maintained that the term "resistance" correctly describes the amalgamated practices of defiance executed by both the mind and body. I have argued that on the plantations slave resistance at a psychological level (exemplified in folklore) influenced practical, physical tactics of resistance such as poisoning, breaking machinery, working slowly or theft, which in turn contributed to rebellion and resistances aimed at overturning the plantation power structures.

In my book *Anansi's Journey: A Story of Jamaican Cultural Resistance* (Zobel Marshall 2012), I insist that slave resistance and survival methods were represented and encouraged by the Anansi folk tales. Anansi not only reflected and inspired these models of behavior, but played a multi-functional role in slaves' lives, establishing a sense of continuity with an African past and offering them the means to transform and assert their identity within the boundaries of captivity. As Lawrence Levine argues, slaves in the New World devoted "the structure and message of their tales to the compulsions and needs of their present situation" (Levine 1977: 90).

In an interview I conducted in 2005, Jamaican scholar Barry Chevannes explained that Anansi is able to expand the limits of the existing moral order and push back its boundaries:

In the stories you say "is Anansi mek it"; you use Anansi as a way of saying it because of him that certain things are the way that they are – why cockroach and fowl are at logger heads – they used to be friends, but Anansi caused that to happen. But how he caused it to happen is that he introduces unethical forms of

behaviour into what was in fact a moral order, and upturns that and creates a *new order* in which things are the way that they are.

As a figure of disorder by introducing the amoral into the moral order he expands the moral order and changes things, bring about a new order.

(Chevannes 2005)

In Jamaica, when Anansi injects disorder into the plantation order, rather than ultimately strengthening the established order through making allowances for fantasises of freedom and boundary breaking, Anansi proves to be a medium through which slaves could struggle towards the creation of a new order without inversely strengthening the plantation hierarchy.

Jamaican plantation owner Matthew Lewis (1775–1818) made his first journey to Jamaica in 1812 to the two plantations he inherited after his father's death, namely the Cornwall plantation in the far west of the island and Hordley in the far east (Terry in Lewis 1999: xiv). Lewis records “Nancy Stories” and “Neger tricks” in his journal, some of which are told by the “picturesque” storyteller Goose Sho-Sho “with her little sable audience squatted round her” (Lewis 1999: 194, 254). He believes that the stories “resemble our quaint old *nursery* tales” and refers to them with a mocking tone, explaining that he enjoys the simplicity of such “specimen(s) of negro facetiae” (Lewis 1999: 254, 261). However, Goose Sho-Sho’s “*nursery* tale” turns out to be rather more ambiguous than Lewis had hoped; he comments to his friend Margaret Baron-Wilson in a letter from Jamaica (dated March 1815) that the “expected moral of the tale” was never delivered as it *must* have been superseded by the storyteller’s desire for the “rum and backy” she expected from him, and he feels obliged to condemn the tale’s apparent commendation of lying (Lewis 1999: 160–1). Lewis goes on to document a raft of “tricks” played on him by the enslaved on his plantation, from slaves letting his cattle out to trample his best canes, working deliberately slowly, pretending to be unwell or injured, repeatedly lying to him, poisoning, and a multitude of domestic disruptions aimed at causing damage and undermining the efficiency of the plantation instigated by his house slaves (see Scott 1990 for a discussion of the use of trickster tales as a display of veiled cultural resistance to oppression; see also Zobel Marshall 2009).

On the plantations, the Anansi tales did amalgamate with elements of European folklore; features of the “fairy tale” entered into the narratives for example, we are introduced to Princesses, Princes and European folk characters (see the “Devil and the Princess,” Jekyll 1966: 51, 148). In Jamaican tales, African food and drinks described in the Asante tales, such as palm-wine and palm-nuts (Rattray 1930: 33, 35, 121), were replaced by Jamaican ones and these were combined with the new European influences; in Jekyll’s Anansi tale “Tomby” Jekyll has “Miss Princess” going to market for a truly Jamaican feast of:

little salt fish an’ me little hafoo yam, t’reepence a red peas fe make me soup,
quatty ‘kellion, gill a garlic to put with me little nick-snack, quatty ripe banana,
bit fe Gungo peas, an’ me see if me can get quatty beef bone.

(Jekyll 1966: 17)

Jekyll explains the African roots of the word ‘hafoo’:

“hafoo ... an African word, a kind of yam”; “kellion, skellion or scallion, a kind of onion which does not bulb”; “Gungo, Congo,” a pea “excellent for soup”; quatty, a penny.

(Jekyll 1966: 18–19)

When the European folk character William Tell enters the tales he is assumed, because of his heritage, to be prosperous and powerful. In the tale “William Tell,” “a man who name William Tell” owns many cows and has a tree in his yard called the Huyg. Contact with the tree causes itching, and William Tell offers a cow to anyone who can cut the tree down without scratching. Anansi, predictably, rises to the challenge and cuts the tree down by singing to it (Jekyll 1966: 29–30).

In the 1950s and 1960s, Philip Sherlock, who initially criticized those who scrutinized Anansi tales for a “moral,” produced a number of small collections of Anansi tales for school children, written in Standard English, and inserted a “moral” into the Anansi narrative. In Sherlock and Newman’s 1959 Beacon Library collection the tale “Work-Let-Me-See” tells of how Anansi and his family are punished for their greed by being turned into spiders. Although the violence is not tempered in this tale, the preface warns “there are many stories of Annancy. Some are good, others are not so good” (Newman & Sherlock 1959: n.p.). The tales were further sanitized in 1970s in collections written in Standard English such as Alex Gradussov’s *Anancy in Love* (1971) and David Makhanall’s *The Best of Brer Anansi* (1973), *The Invincible Brer Anansi* (1974), and *Brer Anansi Strikes Again* (1976). In these Anansi tales much of the violence found in traditional tales is softened and Anansi is presented as less anarchic and ruthless. For example, in *Anancy in Love*, even though Gradussov integrates a few Jamaican Creole words and phrases into his adaptations (with footnotes entitled “Jamaican expressions translated into standard speech”), his characters live “happily ever after,” Anansi is invited to “dinner parties” and, uncharacteristically, he keeps his promises. Although Anansi gets angry – when his rival the Rooster runs off with his love interest his “anger knew no bounds” – he refrains from expressing it through destructive acts. One encounters in most of Gradussov’s tales a surprisingly well-behaved and rather docile Anansi (Gradussov 1971). Gradussov’s collections are perfect examples of the way that indigenous folk tales have been distorted to suit the Eurocentric worldview as white collectors seize narrative power and empty the folk tale of its subversive signifiers and symbolism. As Bacchilega argues:

European collectors’ motives, methods, and theories ... deracinated tales from living cultures, ignored existing genre systems and social uses, and unequivocally made the orality/writing difference into a hierarchy. These structures of power impacted the circulation of folk tales and fairy tales from and in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

(Bacchilega 2013: 23)

There should be no “happily ever after” endings in Jamaican Anansi tales; they are replete with echoes of the brutality, power structures and trauma of plantation life. Anansi is anarchic and violent, characters are mercilessly whipped, burnt

and tortured and the stories usually end in the brutal destruction of adversaries. In this respect, they can be compared to the nineteenth century stories of the Grimm brothers and Hans Christian Andersen which also focus on themes of trauma, abandonment, violence and uncontrollable passions. The twentieth century “fairy tale,” which has been cemented by Disney in the popular imagination, adheres to a strict framework established in both a patriarchal, Christian and Eurocentric perspective. Indeed, Disney has had such a wide-ranging influence that their adaptations of fairy tales often supersede all other versions of the story. One has to look no further than the Brer rabbit tales and Disney’s grotesque distortion of the slave trickster stories in *Song of the South* (1946); an adaptation which romanticises slavery and empties the trickster Brer rabbit of all his symbolic power and resistances. In the sanitised fairy-tale world history is rewritten or obliterated and characters are rewarded for their (Caucasian) beauty, faith and riches and, ultimately, the rigid structures of patriarchy, white privilege and Eurocentric social hierarchies are dutifully upheld.

ANANSI RECLAIMED: LITERARY TRICKSTER

Contemporary Caribbean authors are now using Anansi stories for their own political and cultural purposes in response to what they see as the needs of the modern Caribbean. Moving away from sanitized versions of the stories found in the pages of European collections, late twentieth- and twenty-first-century Caribbean writers have begun “writing back” to these depictions of the trickster spider to reclaim narrative power and pitch Anansi as the embodiment of Caribbean cultural resilience, renewal, cross-cultural fertilisation and creativity. Trinidadian Cynthia James sees Anansi as a “paradigm for the West Indian ethos of survival, inherent in the resourcefulness that has sustained West Indian people, regardless of particular ethnic ancestry.” She explains that “in this sense Anansi represents the indigenous syncretism that has evolved over centuries of Caribbean Creolisation” (James 2004: 3).

In his essay “Jazz and the West Indian Novel” (1967) Edward Kamau Brathwaite makes connections between jazz improvisation and the Anansi stories. He explains that many Caribbean folk forms contain elements of improvisation that create similar patterns to the forms of improvisation used by a jazz musician. The Anansi story is “an almost perfect example of improvisation, in the jazz sense, where tone, rhythm and image come together to create a certain kind of effect” (Brathwaite 1995: 328). Brathwaite takes an Anansi story as an example of how the structure of a story can create a verbal melody. This effect is often the result of the repetition of a theme, which Brathwaite likens to a jazz “riff.” This jazz “riff” is a “kind of collective response which marks the end of one improvisation and the beginning of the next” in music, poetry and folk tales (Brathwaite 1995: 329). Brathwaite argues that the Anansi story is an ethically grounded aesthetic model for literature and that Caribbean writing in this form will “absorb its rhythms from the people of this community” (1995: 330). This, he maintains, is a step towards an integrated Creole culture and a Creole worldview, which starts with the preservation and adaptation of folk forms that reflect both the culture and history of Caribbean people.

Well ahead of his time, Andrew Salkey’s work is an example of the kind of writing Brathwaite describes. His poems and novels are inspired by Caribbean oral traditions and often play with the rhythms and structure of Creole and Anansi narratives.

Jamaican-born Salkey created two volumes of his own versions of Anansi stories, *Anancy's Score* (1973) and *Anancy, Traveller* (1992). In *Anancy's Score*, Salkey creates a unique vision of Anansi, portraying a politicized freedom fighter and symbol of resistance and hope, who guides his people through a troubled history but remains confusing, contradictory, complex, ambiguous and tricky. Salkey describes his Anansi as one who “holds no reservations; makes only certain crucial allowances; he knows no boundaries; respects no one, not even himself, at times; and he makes a mockery of everybody’s assumptions and value judgments” (Salkey 1973: Author’s Note). Global political issues of war and nuclear power are addressed in “Vietnam Anancy and the Black Tulip” and “Anancy and the Atomic Horse.” The story “Political Spider” starts: “Me name is Anancy is spider is Hope is a green t’ing” (Salkey 1973: 31). As the reader follows Anansi on his journey through time and space, Salkey reveals the complexities of the history of the Caribbean people. Salkey’s Anansi may be untrustworthy, but he is a guide, a solver of problems and an emblem of change and regeneration. He is caught in a web between two worlds, the old and the new, and tries to help his people to come to grips with the difficulties of the past, present and future of the Caribbean (Salkey 1973; Purchas-Tulloch 1976: 229). This Anansi has been reworked according to new conditions; Salkey uses him as a medium through which to embolden working-class black Jamaicans and encourage their radical political development.

Anancy's Score contains vivid and abstract illustrations of Anansi drawn by Jamaican artist Errol Lloyd in black ink. Both Salkey and Lloyd were highly politicised Jamaicans, influenced by the ideas of radical black Caribbean anti-colonialists such as C.L.R. James and John La Rose. Lloyd’s illustrations have an unsettling dream-like quality with Anansi often lurking in the corners of the image, disguised as another object or in his web, surrounded by fragmented forms and shapes. Lloyd depicts a figure so central that all other images on the page absorb the attributes of the spider and his web (for further discussion on Salkey’s Anancy stories see Zobel Marshall 2010).

Guyanese author Wilson Harris depicts Anansi as representative of an artistic link between black culture of the old and the New World; for Harris he is symbolic of regeneration and forms of creative resistance in the face of enslavement and colonialism. He makes a connection between Anansi and the “limbo” dance he claims developed on the slave ships of the middle passage. Harris believes that the limbo originated from the need for the slaves to contort themselves into human spiders due to lack of space. As Harris watches modern-day limbo-dancers crouching, like Anansi, close to the ground, he interprets their movements as representative of the creation of something positive from something terrible; for him the limbo-dancer passing under the obstacle is like the slave passing thorough a gateway or threshold into a new world (Harris 1981: 378). Harris calls the metamorphosis of African culture into the New World the “Limbo-Anancy Syndrome,” an “art of creative coexistence born of great peril and the strangest capacity for renewal” (Harris 1981: 378). These are the “arts of originality springing out of an age of limbo,” which Harris describes as “a true creative phenomenon of the West Indies” (Jonas 1990: 73).

Harris sees the peoples of the Caribbean sharing a collective “Caribbean culture” and believes that the key to its survival is not in the total recall of the African past but a form of social deconstruction and creation, renewal, rebirth and cross-cultural fertilization. He advocates a need to find the light in the heart of “hidden”

cultures – not to be found solely in the West or in the Caribbean but in the collision and cross-fertilization between the two worlds. Anansi is symbolic of this meeting place, market-place or crossroads in which a creative interaction can take place – a powerful energy of appropriation that points away from “both apartheid and from ghetto fixations” (cited in Jonas 1990: 73). It is in this space, at the crossroads of cultures, that Chevannes also positions Anansi:

The crossroads is a space that is rife with a disorder, where different cultures come and mix, a way to look at is as a *liminal* space. And this is where these hero figures function best, in that whole sense of disorder. But it is a disorder that changes and brings order ... that is why in the stories you say “is Anansi mek it.”
(Chevannes 2005)

Anansi, both African and Caribbean, is representative of a cultural crossroads as he inhabits multiple cultural, historical and geographical locations. Chevannes states that as children he and his friends learnt though Anansi tales that “nothing happened unless we are prepared to travel, and nothing will be discovered unless at the *crossroad*” (Chevannes 2001: 5). Representative of both evil and goodness, of journeys, travel, liminal states and multiple possibilities, the crossroads have played an important symbolic role in the folk practices of Jamaicans. On the final night of a nine-night ceremony the mourning procession travels to the nearest crossroads and performs a ritual enabling the spirit of the deceased, who is often described in their final hour as “travelling,” to journey on whichever path they choose. During this ritual the deceased’s home is cleared out and their clothes are disposed of at the crossroads (Chevannes 2001: 6).

Joyce Jonas (1990) uses Anansi and the “Great House” as two central icons in her work to describe the social and cultural structuring of the Caribbean landscape. The Great House is the plantation owner’s house of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, looming over the plantation fields. For Jonas it represents a colonial worldview of binary oppositions: white/black, exploiter/exploited, “First World”/ “Third World.” Anansi, in contrast, is a symbol of the folk and folk-history, he is everything that is rejected by the Great House, disregarded as dirt – folk dirt. Jonas uses a host of Anansi-inspired metaphors, similes and puns in her writing, often focusing on the symbolism of the web and Anansi at its center, spinning tales and wisdom. For her, Anansi represents a deconstructive and re-creative force that finds expression through Caribbean authors or “Caribbean artists.” Anansi is a celebration of disorder and chaos; he is full of revolutionary energy and lives in the rejected “betwixt” and “between” spaces outside of the institutions and authority of the Great House (Jonas 1990:73).

Jonas sees modern Caribbean writers using “Anansi strategies” to deconstruct the imperialist “text” and transform the landscapes of the formally colonized world; as in the rite-of-passage ritual, his acts of disruption initiate new perceptions and insights. Writers using “Anansi strategies” in their work break down the authority and binary oppositions of the “Great House” and, using folk icons like Anansi as their muse, weave “folk” techniques into their writing (Jonas 1990: 73). The Caribbean artist is like Anansi spinning new formations in a postcolonial world. Caribbean writers weave a thread to escape a colonial worldview and climb to a new freedom. The writer takes the strand of linearity (oppressive history or plot) and complicates it by

making a patterned web of connections and interrelationships, a woven “text” that transforms history (Jonas 1990: 2–9). This inclusion of what Jonas terms “Anansi strategies” in the Caribbean writer’s text is disruptive of the old order, and challenges the structuring of the colonial physical and spiritual landscape. As Jonas explains, the “Anancy artist is the masquerading carnival figure par excellence, celebrating play in a structured world that threatens momentarily to destroy what is most precious to the human spirit” (Jonas 1990: 5; Zobel Marshall 2012).

In 2005, British fantasy writer Neil Gaiman authored *Anansi Boys*, a novel in which Anansi is culturally and historically located in Britain, Africa and the Caribbean. For Gaiman, Anansi is “the spirit of rebellion, able to overturn the social order, create wealth out of thin air, and baffle the devil. Some said he could cheat even Death himself” (Gaiman 2006: front cover). Gaiman’s protagonist, “Fat Charlie” Nancy, a black Jamaican workaholic Londoner, finds out at his father’s funeral that his father was the “West African trickster god” Anansi, and that he has a long-lost brother named “Spider.” The charming Spider, who evidently shares his father’s powers and love of trickery, visits Charlie Nancy. Spider is able to shape-shift and assume the guise of Charlie, and soon causes chaos in Charlie’s highly-organized and very normal life; he sleeps with Charlie’s girlfriend, gets him sacked from his job and arrested, causing Charlie to call on his own powers and connection to the gods for help. Spider represents the darker aspects of Anansi, while Charlie Nancy is Anansi’s comical, foolish side. Gaiman successfully interweaves the history of Anansi into his text and stays true to the trickster’s African and Caribbean characteristics, creating a modern-day Anansi tale which evidences the continuing appeal of Anansi and his applicability to modern-day scenarios and the experiences of the black Diaspora.

In the comic book series, *The Amazing Spider-man* (2003), a story entitled “A Spider’s Tail” written by M.J. Straczynski and illustrated by John Romita further reveals the malleability of Anansi and his continuing ability to inspire popular contemporary culture (Straczynski 2003). The story explains the origins of the superhero Spiderman: the “first Spider-Man,” the comic explains, was named Kwaku Anansi. Depicted as something akin to an Asante elder, he is described as looking “like a wise old man” and living amongst the Asante in Ghana. Travelling across Africa on his strong webs of strings, Kwaku Anansi was hungry for knowledge and climbed to the “Sky-God,” Nyame, keeper of all the stories and wisdom in the world “past, future and present” (Straczynski 2003: 3). In exchange for wisdom and stories Nyame asked Kwaku Anansi to be his faithful servant; Anansi agreed and left “the eyes of the waking world” (Straczynski 2003:6). Anansi became ever more a spider in his service to Nyame, but passed Nyame’s knowledge down to his many spider children. It was one of Anansi’s children that bit Spiderman and gave him his superhero powers.

In Straczynski’s tale Spiderman travels to an Asante village to fight his arch enemy in a temple dedicated to Kwaku Anansi. This modern interpretation depicts Anansi as a man who, unlike his Caribbean incarnation, feels guilt and love; when told by Nyame he must forsake all who knew him before, Anansi replies, “I cannot abandon those who turned on me in need, those I love, those I revere” (Straczynski 2003: 4). Adding to the varied interpretations of Anansi’s origins, Straczynski successfully fuses together two traditional Asante tales (gaining stories and wisdom from Nyame) and in doing so pays homage to Anansi’s roots whilst creating a modern comic-book hero.

“DEM A ANANSI”: CONTEMPORARY ANANSI CULTURE

While Anansi has been taken up by contemporary authors as symbolic of the future of Caribbean culture in its myriad of hybrid cultural forms, as well as an emblem of survival and resistance, he has also long been associated with gangsterism and greed in Jamaica. In 2001 there was a national debate in Jamaica in response to a call from the National Union of Teachers to ban Anansi as they felt he represented a culture of violent selfishness that fueled the rise of gang violence on the island. Educator Pauline Bain called for a “ban on Anansi” as a folk hero in March 2001 at a conference for the Jamaica Teachers Association. “If you want to ginnal (cheat) and out-smart people, this is what he represents” stated Pauline Bain (Roxborough 2001). Many that were present agreed that Anansi was an undesirable role model: he was the ultimate hoaxer, a cunning deceiver, a master of lies and malice and an inspiration to the gangsters and criminals who blighted Jamaican society (Roxborough 2001). In the wake of this discussion, the *Jamaica Gleaner* featured readers’ fiercely divergent views about Anansi’s future. Those in favor of banning Anansi argued that the character encourages “trickery and unscrupulous behavior amongst children,” an influence which they termed an “Anansi Syndrome.” But the proposal to ban Anansi also caused outrage: “If you don’t leave Anancy alone I promise the mother of all demonstrations” stated one *Gleaner* reader (Reynolds 2001; see also Zobel Marshall 2001).

This debate has not been laid to rest. Anansi in Jamaica today is still considered symbolic of a gangster attitude – the violent “badman” who will stop at nothing to get his own way. One of the major stars of the dancehall scene, a scene which is viewed by certain more conservative middle-class Jamaicans as lewd, immoral and inciting violence, is Vybz Kartel, who has often been described as a modern Anansi. Jamaican novelist Colin Channer, for instance, has argued that Kartel is the ultimate Anansi figure: “Many cultures have a trickster figure,” he explains, “the trickster finds a way to get something when there seems to be nothing” (Kenner 2011).

Kartel, who is well known for his sexually explicit and aggressive lyrics, was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder in 2014. Imprisonment appears to have only cemented his popularity as he subsequently released over 50 recordings from prison and his popularity in the global dancehall scene continues to grow.

Kartel has been accused of lightening his skin with bleaching creams, a growing trend amongst dancehall fans, and advocating the use of bleaching products. He has a popular brand of Vybz Kartel “cake soap,” a blue soap traditionally used in Jamaica to bleach laundry which he released shortly after his song “cake soap” in which he boasts that washing/bleaching his face with cake soap makes him irresistible to “gyals” (girls) (“Me a dem iccreem/Seh mi look cool like mi wash/Mi face wit di cake soap”) (2017, Genius Media Group). Kartel explained that the basis of both the song and his “cake soap” brand was a joke: “When people were talking about whether I bleached my skin, I made a joke that I used cake soap ... I made some songs about it, and cake soap started to sell like hot bread in Jamaica” (Kenner 2011).

Kartel’s ability to continue to release songs and grow his fortune and celebrity status from jail, combined with his creation of a successful brand born out of a trick played out on the public, cement his image as a contemporary Anansi. He is the “badman” the law can’t touch and several commentators have drawn this comparison.

Similarly to Anansi, the trickster Kartel and the type of dancehall culture he represents have been depicted as symbolic of many of the problems in Jamaican society. In an article entitled “Dancehall Culture Pushing Crime” in *The Jamaican Observer*, Former Jamaican National Security Minister Peter Bunting is quoted as describing Kartel’s dancehall lyrics as examples of the “social dysfunctionality behind criminality in Jamaica” (Robinson 2013). Bunting argues that Anansi is emblematic of the popularity of anti-heroes who challenge authority in Jamaica: “I think that a national hero that we haven’t named officially is Anansi. Because Jamaicans seem to love ... an anti-authoritarian element in our culture” (quoted in Robinson 2013). Indeed, Kartel himself inserts the Anansi figure into his lyrics but also points the finger and condemns other “Anansis.” In the song “Lyricist” (2011) the Anansis are Americans who exploit the island through profits from oil drilling (see Kartel 2011).

While the popularity of traditional Jamaican cultural forms may have diminished, evidently Anansi still acts as a vehicle for Jamaican society to scrutinize its political and moral frameworks. Kartel may symbolize some of the worst aspects of the Anansi figure, but he also points out that he is not the only trickster in the ring. Walter Jekyll in his early twentieth-century collection of Anansi tales, made a direct link between Anansi and “the Negro” and dubiously commented that for both Anansi and the Negro language was the “art of disguising thought” and “straightforwardness is a quality which the Negro absolutely lacks” (Jekyll 1966: xii, 53). However, as Jamaican Playwright Rex Nettleford responded, “Annancy admirers will probably reply that in order to cope with an unstraight and crooked world one needs unstraight and crooked paths” (Jekyll 1966: xii, 53).

In contemporary Jamaican society Anansi still acts as a vehicle through which fixed views are challenged and the traumatic legacies of slavery and colonialism are negotiated. Symbolic of self-interest, survival tactics, gangsterism, crime and internalized racism, Anansi is also still viewed as harnessing a vital Caribbean ethos rooted in the celebration of African retentions and cultural hybridity, resilience and resistance. As Jamaican author Velma Pollard explains, Anansi will continually transform and endure, claiming narrative power over the Caribbean cultural landscape and bringing into question the moral, ethical and political frameworks of the day:

I think people will keep on telling Anansi stories forever. The stories are part of the fabric of our society, and even people who don’t tell them, they quote them in the DJ stands. These modern young people – all the time you hear them saying something from an Anansi story, or something from a proverb ... without even *thinking* about it they pick up a part of what is Caribbean.

(Pollard 2005)

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM

African fairy tales and literacies

Vivian Yenika-Agbaw

As the twenty-first century unfolds, it is becoming more and more evident that educators must rethink the entire business of how we educate children in schools. There are several reasons for this shift in thought with the obvious being the advent of modern globalization that positions our competing histories as worthy of equal attention vis-à-vis the colonial hierarchical mind-set of Western superiority that has informed curriculum development and classroom practices for more than a century. This implicit binary notion of superiority/inferiority implies that only knowledge from certain cultures warrants our attention. As a result of this thinking, the status quo remains intact with students in the USA and Africa pursuing an assimilationist track of education that perpetuates the idea of Westernization. This must change!

While there have been several attempts at curriculum and/or educational reforms to address some of these issues, as Frances Klein, a curriculum theorist, acknowledges, there is a greater need now with the shifting demography of urban and rural centers in both the Global North and South (Klein 1994). Klein proposes two curriculum designs: “problem solving or societal curriculum design” and the “[i]ndividual or student-centered design” (1994: 26) explaining further that, “[t]he data source of the problem solving or societal design is life that students experience both within and without school” (26). Although the focus of her discourse is on the student, I believe that designs that allow for the teacher and student to co-create the curriculum might actually afford opportunities for inclusive discourses, since these consider students as human beings with worthy life experiences. In this model of learning, the hegemony of the colonial model of hierarchical knowledge is slightly muted depending on how the teacher–student engagement with the task at hand is constantly negotiated. This in turn encourages deviation from the one-size-fits-all curriculum that has informed the Western school curriculum all these years. Pinar expands on this argument, noting that:

[d]espite early-20th-century progressive fantasies of the school as a laboratory for democracy, the truth is that the American public schools have functioned to make immigrants into “Americans” and to prepare all citizens for jobs in an industrial—now largely postindustrial—economy.

(2008: 17)

This can be said about public (i.e. state) schools in various regions of the world where the Western curriculum continues to drive education, and as such controls what students learn about their surrounding world, and how they are made to perceive themselves. The only difference is that the skill set these students develop might not necessarily prepare them for their local realities. For instance, in “Textbook, Literacy, and Citizenship: The Case of Anglophone Cameroon,” I draw attention to textbooks’ ongoing colonization of Anglophone pupils, partly because these textbooks are modeled after a colonial prototype that insists on Europeanizing Cameroonians. It is a more fundamental set of assumptions and practices that stem from Africa’s colonial past which needs to be addressed if educators really want to empower all children to be contributing citizens in this era of globalization. In short, education should go beyond merely conditioning children to think and act like colonial masters.

During a lecture at Pennsylvania State University, the eminent scholar, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o explained the difference between an education that “conditions” and one that values knowledge sharing and circulation (2017: n.p.). The education that conditions, he asserts, can be disruptive, as it creates insiders with an outsider’s mentality: it trains learners to negate the self, coercing them to value knowledge from the West over knowledge from indigenous groups, and in this way it reinforces the hierarchical systems of knowledge production. Ngũgĩ further insists that we need to understand the difference between education that mystifies knowledge and conditions learners to look at the world through the Western hierarchical lens, and knowledge that leads learners to study and explore the unknown for the purpose of self-empowerment. This latter form of learning, for Ngũgĩ, operates on the assumption that knowledge in itself is empowering, and so works towards proliferation of the sources of knowledge.

If we agree that education conditions whilst knowledge empowers, it makes sense to interrogate the school curriculum that controls knowledge within that institutional space. For Paraskeva, “the best way to transform schools and their agents into real, critical transformative leaders who engage in the tough endeavors to democratize democracy” is to “struggle against the Western eugenic coloniality of knowledge” (2016: 21). From this perspective, a literary curriculum that integrates fairy tales should maintain a horizontal approach that recognizes the existence of other traditional tales across cultures, and reject the linear approach currently used in public schools and at most Teacher Education programs in the US that rank order knowledge – an approach that conveys to teacher candidates the idea that Europe is the continent of origin of traditional fairy tales and remains the normative standard. In the teaching of fairy tales, as in other fields of education, in other words, educators must reimagine school curricula to reflect the modern global reality. Such a transformative vision and practice demands that we open “up the canon of knowledge ... [by] challenging and destroying the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being... [which affords us opportunities to] save democracy by democratizing it” (Paraskeva 2016: 22). This is possible only if educators are willing to make radical decisions about school curricula that dismantle hierarchical knowledge. Modern globalization now mandates this way of thinking about twenty-first century schooling and makes it imperative that learning involves recognition of multiple ways of knowing and representing. To this end, Santome posits,

[i]f schools are now places for the convergence of populations from different geographical origins—students whose histories, traditions, and values also differ in their origins—then it is clear that school syllabi, teaching strategies and models of assessment and evaluation are all in urgent need of review.

(2016: 510)

Such a review might also consider artifacts such as stories from various cultures an integral part of the curriculum. This is one way to introduce a pedagogy of liberation to undermine the prevailing “assimilationist” tendencies, which often render the curriculum a tool to enforce imperialist ideologies. Assimilationist practices impose what Ngũgĩ refers to as an “outsider mentality” upon children who are not members of dominant cultures; a mentality that functions to negate their cultures and thus their very existence as a people (2017: n.p.). Furthermore, as Santome notes,

[t]he cultural homogeneity, not to say assimilationism, promoted by most schools produces and amplifies social, economic, and cultural inequalities. It is a phenomenon that is particularly favored, moreover, in times such as ours, when neoliberal economic policies are invading and conditioning social institutions and peoples’ lives.

(2016: 510)

My chapter builds on this premise, arguing for the decolonization and democratization of fairy tales within the literary curriculum at public schools in the US and Africa. I argue that in this era of modern globalization when knowledge circulation is more rampant, African tales, folk and fairy, should be an integral part of the public school curriculum across the globe. They are linguistically rich, intellectually engaging, entertaining, and reflect the socio-cultural histories of the regions with which they are identified in the continent. These tales should not merely be introduced as an afterthought to a Eurocentric curriculum that projects Western tales as the ideal; they should share centre stage.

I discuss sample folk and picturebook variants of select tales associated with Africa from two tale types: ATU 510A (“Cinderella”) and ATU 333 (“Little Red Riding Hood”), in each case reiterating the significance of their inclusion in the curriculum and showing how such inclusion enhances socio-cultural literacies through a natural engagement in comparative analysis of variants, a form of analysis that enables teachers to better facilitate critical conversations around texts and to emphasize the practice of inter-cultural dialogue. Additionally, I draw attention to cultural features in the chosen tales that locate them within specific regions and/or local spaces in Africa. In this way, I reiterate Ngũgĩ’s notion of connectivity expressed in the phrase “[f]rom here to there and there to here,” and his related conception of the ‘globalectic’ imagination: an imagination that “is derived from the shape of the globe” on which “there is no one center” and “any point is equally a center” (Ngũgĩ 2012: 8). This view, I postulate, divulges the cultural contributions to knowledge production from both the Global North and Global South, and the resulting artifacts that may appear as “fairy” tales in various forms and modes. It therefore deconstructs the hierarchical systems of knowledge that have held the school curriculum hostage for centuries, projecting instead the “curriculum field as a public right, a public agora,

a public responsibility, as well as a public good, [that] needs to play a key role in interrupting the predatory imperial impulses of globalization and reshaping it toward epistemological justice” (Paraskeva 2016: 23). Such justice entails an overhaul of the literary curriculum and the incorporation within it of stories from marginalized cultures and voices that provide alternative views on crucial events/ideas related to our global histories. It affords a platform for lively discussions on the imperial and colonial contacts that have led to the present global disorder (Mignolo 2016b) and with which we must contend in order to find workable solutions to get our society functioning better. For instance, issues of cultural authenticity in stories situated within the larger framework of imperialistic and colonial encounters/domination/conquests/conflicts become clearer leading to a greater appreciation of what artifacts like folk tales in their varied appellations stemming out from such turbulence might afford a reader. The quest for justice demands unwavering commitment if educators are to disassemble the Eurocentric matrix of power. It also entails that we bring our students on board helping them to see the world differently, enabling them to “learn to work for social justice from the outset of schooling ... considering the everyday micropolitics of the classroom and playground, the school and the neighborhood” (Comber 2016: 27). In the next sections I briefly discuss decolonial theory; then offer my observations on the fairy tales of interest, and I conclude with a plea for African tales to be an integral part of the global literary curriculum.

DECOLONIAL THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION: THE ART OF STORYTELLING

De Lissovoy posits that “[d]ecolonial theory is concerned with confronting, challenging, and undoing the dominative and assimilative force of colonialism as a historical and contemporary process, and the cultural and epistemological Eurocentrism that underwrites it” (2010: 280). It expands on the anticolonial mission of social justice that recognizes knowledge as not limited only to the West, and pushes for the validation of other ways of knowing to diffuse the assimilationist tendencies of the school curriculum. De Lissovoy notes further that “[t]he condition of globality brings to the forefront, in a new way, the ethical problem of how to live together, and the ontological question of the nature of that togetherness” (2010: 280). To function as a society, we rely on each other. However, for the sustainability of such a relationship that relies heavily on interdependence, the basic issue of equity needs to be addressed. This has not been the case for centuries, as modern histories of conflict have demonstrated.

Why do African knowledge systems continue to take a backseat in educational spaces on the global stage? I have pondered this question over the years. In my field of study, children’s literature in education, this problem manifests itself in several ways, one of which is the limited availability of books by Africans and about Africa to engage children in Africa’s stories, artistic and cultural aesthetics, and histories. Does this mean that Africa has no stories for children? No! Rather, that many African stories are not recorded in print. Those stories that are printed, moreover, often do not appear in the Western language of modernity that enables African storytellers to participate in global literary discourses. Because Africa’s stories are primarily presented in an oral medium, Western global modernity does not seem to recognize

them as having the aesthetic sensibilities required for them to be classified as literature. On this topic, Ngũgĩ remarks that:

[a]esthetic feudalism, arising from placing cultures in a hierarchy, is best seen in the relationship between oral and written languages, where the oral, even when viewed as being “more” authentic or closer to the natural, is treated as the bondsman to the writing master.

(2012: 63)

Africa’s tales, according to the assumption that the “oral [is] native and the written [is] master,” are regarded as belonging to the lowest echelon of quality in the canon of global tales (Ngũgĩ 2012). This heightens the urgency for educators to decolonize the curriculum, and in so doing to “[remake] the world such that the enslaved, colonised, and exploited peoples can regain their ontological density, voice, land, history, knowledge and power” (Ndlovu 2015: 23). In the process, educators would also be expanding the body of knowledge in regard to storytelling and examining how this might contribute to helping learners to better understand the uniqueness of their local spaces, but also how these local spaces might interconnect with global spaces through migration (forced/self/political) and other histories. This process may start with the stories we tell about our lives within the shifting spaces we occupy, but it extends to stories we tell of each other from various encounters, each of which remind us of the role played by “domination/exploitation/conflict, and modernity/coloniality/decoloniality” (Mignolo 2016a) in shaping our global and local consciousness as a people.

With the understanding that “[l]iving experiences generate knowledge to solve problems presented in everyday living” (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009: 135), I fall back on memories of my childhood experiences with traditional tales in Cameroon, and their cultural and educational impact on my being. Two versions of a popular tale with which children in the South West region grew up come to mind, the titles of which I remember vaguely as “Sister Malinga,” and “Don’t Touch My Bone.” These stories were memorable partly because of the graphic nature of the songs we were made to sing along to. While the stories were narrated in pidgin English, the lyrics remained in part in standard English as shown below:

Version 1:

Help me Hunter, help me Hunter, help me;
My mother killed me
My father ate me
Sister Malinga gathered my bones and buried under the tree

Version 2:

Hunter man, Hunter man
Don’t touch my bone;
My brother killed me in the bush and take my flower away;
Oh-oh Nching, my mother, Nching, my mother Nchin, Nchin, Nchin, Nchin.

While at the time, I simply enjoyed these oral tales not taking their contents seriously, decades later I realized from research that these stories might be identified as

belonging to Aarne-Thompson tale type ATU 780, “The Singing Bone,” and that they were aligned to a certain degree with the French Louisianan and Antiguan variants. As a child growing up at a British Unilever plantation, all I knew was that they were Lobe stories, which identifies the physical space where I had experienced them. I may not remember the details of each version, but the moral issues the stories addressed gave my childhood self some insights into certain behaviors that envious and desperate people might manifest. “The Singing Bone” by the Brothers Grimm has a publication date of 1812 and was part of their famous collection, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. I can only speculate how this tale type came to be so popular in Anglophone Cameroon during the post-independence era, but what is apparent from their narrative trajectory is the fact that the migration of these stories to a new place has resulted in them taking on some of the characteristics of that particular cultural space and being made anew. Akombi’s written version of this tale type, “Nchinghe My Mother,” published in 1993 and set in a different location in Cameroon, which I encountered in 2003, seems far removed from these versions of my childhood. He has localized the narrative more, for instance, by replacing “flower” with “wood” on the grounds that it did not make sense to him that violence would occur amongst Cameroonian children over something so frivolous as a flower, whilst it could happen over something more substantive like wood that has a functional role in contributing to children’s well-being. Akombi’s story seems to reject the possibility of fratricide too, making the conflict one about envy and abandonment of one’s kin in a bush. But overall the basic principles have remained intact in all three versions. Such stories, and others like them, are widespread in the African continent, where they can be found in both written and oral forms. Despite this prevalence of African stories, however, tales of this kind remain absent from school curricula (including curricula in the African continent), an omission that must be seen as a deliberate attempt to present the continent as deficient in this regard and to force Africans to rely heavily on Western stories.

Tlostanova and Mignolo discuss four spheres of what decolonial theorists consider the “colonial matrix of power ... constituted in the 16th century” (2009: 134). The sphere of interest within this matrix with which the present chapter engages is the “control of knowledge and subjectivity through education” (135); and the knowledge with which I am concerned is the democratization of traditional tales in the curriculum. Accordingly, I open the next section with a brief discussion of fairy tales and then proceed with an analysis of African variants of fairy tales and how these could be democratized in the school curriculum.

DEMOCRATIZING FAIRY TALES IN THE LITERARY CURRICULUM: FAIRY TALES

Most teacher candidates that have passed through my methods course in children’s literature are often not aware that fairy tales can be associated with Africa or non-white cultures. One reason for this disbelief stems from the fact that the literary curriculum with which they are familiar, broadly speaking, incorporates only European tales, or tales that have been authorized by Europe. Another lies in the prevalence of Disneyfied fairy tales that celebrate Eurocentric princesses and princes. African students have grown up with these images, and so it is all most of them know until

they find themselves studying fairy tale on courses such as mine. A confusion that is especially apparent lies in their understanding of the differences between fairy tales which they identify with Europe and folktales which they identify with indigenous cultures globally. Such binary approaches continue to pose a challenge, since they reinforce the coloniality of the curriculum that has informed their education all these years. In response to experiences such as these it is imperative that the curriculum be democratized so that stories – cultural artifacts that support literacies – occupy equal spaces. This way, the immigrant child in the Western classroom is not always puzzled as to why he/she is not represented in the stories; and the African child in one of the 54 countries in the continent is not obsessed with Eurocentric tales which he/she has come to believe are superior to the local tales of his/her people. Reimagining a literary curriculum that positions African tales as equal to Western tales would help educators to engage in a pedagogy of “deimperialization,” and thus acknowledge African children as human beings with cultural histories worthy of study by all learners. Expanding the curriculum is the first step, but as Ndlovu-Gatsheni rightly observes, “[d]eimperialization entails the acceptance of non-Western people as human beings with ontological density equivalent to that of Western people, and both Africans and Westerners have to decolonize their minds and their practices if another world is to emerge” (2013: 350). Decolonizing our minds and practices demands great commitments, since it requires undoing decades of damage inflicted by Eurocentric education that has socialized and continues to condition us to accept the hierarchical systems that reward only certain ways of knowing. In what follows, I share my analysis of three tales that may serve us in this project of deimperialization. I do this in recognition of the fact that, as Ndlovu argues:

There is a continuing need to push forward the struggle for decolonization while putting pressure on Europe and North America to engage in deimperialization. Only when these two processes are fully implemented and taken to their logical conclusion will another postcolonial world become possible that is informed by genuine global democracy.

(2013: 333)

The urgency for educators to reimagine a curriculum in which non-Western and Western knowledge co-exist as equals is therefore acute.

FAIRY TALES WITH TIES TO AFRICA: AN EPISTEMOLOGY

Many educators would agree that cultural comparison of fairy tales is standard practice in the Western literary curriculum; however, what remains unacknowledged is the fact that the practice of comparison always makes the European text central whilst positioning other versions of a tale as similar/different in relation to the European text. Thus, while some learners may be ‘privileged’ to find themselves in classrooms that expose them to a variety of fairy tales, they might not necessarily understand that some non-European tales, such as the Egyptian tale “Rhodopis and Her Gilded Sandals,” predates Perrault’s wildly popular “Cinderella” that many educators in the past have considered the oldest within tale type ATU 510A and the normative

standard against which other versions are measured. Heidi Anne Heiner, curator of the website *SurLaLune*, notes,

[i]narguably, the most familiar Cinderella tale is the one published by Charles Perrault in his *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Stories, or Tales of Times Passed) in 1697. When most people think of Cinderella, a version of Perrault's tale is the one they imagine.

(2012: n.p.)

However, "Some of the best candidates for earliest Cinderella include Egypt's Rhodopis, Greece's Aspasia, and the Jewish Asenath (or Aseneth)" (2012: n.p.; see also Carruthers 2015; Miller 1920). A literary curriculum that is democratized will reveal this basic information, enabling learners to understand that while Perrault's tale may continue to be a household name in twenty-first century classrooms, older versions of the story from non-Western cultures exist. Classroom discussion of this fact might lead to an investigation as to why knowledge of this kind remains so obscure to the general public.

"Rhodopis and Her Little Gilded Sandals (An Egyptian Tale)" – First century BC/1920

Identified as the oldest known version of Cinderella, "Rhodopis" tells the story of a girl who has one of her golden sandals carried away by an eagle while she is having a bath along the banks of the Nile. The eagle later drops the sandal at a square where a king is holding court. He is at once mesmerized by its size and wonders about the owner. To find out who owns the sandal, he sends a proclamation instructing all the young women in the land to try on the shoe and promises to marry "[s]he whose foot it fits" (Heiner 2012a: n.p.). After several maidens try in vain, he locates Rhodopis at the Sphinx and, after she passes the shoe test, makes her his queen.

The oldest extant version of this story, which includes the motif of the stolen sandal and the shoe test, appears in the *Geography* (XVII.33) of the Ancient Greek historian Strabo (65 BCE–23 CE). The story was rediscovered in the Victorian period, and adapted by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century-writers, including Olive Beaupré Miller, who supplies the version above. These European rewritings of the story increasingly adapt it so that it resembles the more familiar version by Perrault, and for this reason writers such as Joshua Mark (2017) have questioned whether the story is indeed of Egyptian origin. As Mark argues,

Miller brilliantly re-imagined Strabo's account, entwining it with Perrault's tale, to create an ancient Egyptian Cinderella and later writers, having no knowledge of Miller or her work, now present the story as a genuine ancient tale; it is actually less than 100 years old.

(2017: n.p.)

Though the story was undoubtedly reinvented and exoticised by Europeans in nineteenth- and twentieth-century-mediations, however, and though these European interventions worked to appropriate the story for European readers, the fact remains

that the story as it appears in Strabo provides an indication of a narrative, comparable to “Cinderella,” that considerably predates those narrations available in Europe, and that ought to co-exist in any curriculum with the more familiar European versions Mark celebrates.

“The Maiden, the Frog and the Chief’s Son” (translated in 1965)

Several other versions of “Cinderella” that are associated with Africa have been identified by William Bascom (1972), including the Hausa story translated by Neil Skinner in 1965 as “The Maiden, the Frog and the Chief’s Son.” Unlike the story of “Rhodopis,” concerning which it is argued that only the slipper motif is evident (I would add proof of the girl’s identity and her marriage to royalty to this list of evidence), this Hausa tale incorporates several elements of the narrative tradition. Bascom’s primary concern is with how the tale type came to exist in Nigeria, and his central argument is that it “can hardly be indigenous in origin.” Two things are clear, however: a) if it is not indigenous to Nigeria, then it must have come from somewhere; b) the cultural contact with Hausa culture of the time period makes the tale local to that space, especially since it integrates other cultural elements that may be unfamiliar to outsiders. Bascom remarks:

[t]his tale first published more than a century ago, obviously has many elements which are strange to us. Most of them including *fura*, *tuwo*, cowrie shells, kola nuts, Bambara groundnuts, plural wives, and concubines, and the Hausa closing formula are clearly derived from Africa, where it was recorded. Nevertheless, I believe that you should be able to recognize it as a Cinderella tale familiar to us from our childhood.

(1972: 60)

Bascom’s use of “us” and “you” denotes a Eurocentric understanding that implies likeminded folks who have been conditioned to see the world and, in this case, fairy tales through a specific lens. There are elements of the plot structure that echo a narrative pattern with which he is accustomed; but there are other cultural references that destabilize his knowledge base, revealing the “Hausaness” of the tale type which he is unable to detangle from his Eurocentric model/ideal. Based on “four tale type indexes” [510, 510A, 510B] he concludes that:

the tale must have been introduced since European contact, perhaps during the decade between [Frederick] Lugard’s entry into Kano and Sokoto in 1903 and the publication of the tale in 1911, or possibly by earlier missionaries or explorers like Clapperton and Barth in the previous century.

(61)

Regardless of how it arrived in Nigeria, however, this variation is now a Hausa tale. The Hausa’s way of knowing should therefore be recognized as valid, and the tale should be allowed to co-exist with the European versions currently in the curriculum.

Picturebook adaptations of these stories that could be used in school curricula alongside the folk versions discussed above include: John Steptoe’s *Mufaro’s Beautiful*

Daughter (1987), Shirley Climo's *The Egyptian Cinderella* (1992) and Obi Onyefulu's *Chinye: A West African Tale* (1995). Not all of these texts are easily available in the continent, however.

In closing, I now turn to a picturebook adaptation of tale type ATU 333 "Little Red Riding Hood" that is available in South Africa, and has galvanized interest amongst schoolteachers in the West: Niki Daly's *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood from Africa* (2007). First, let me remind readers that African folk variants of this tale have existed for over a century as Tehrani points out in his study of the Red Riding Hood tale type (Tehrani 2013). One such version, attributed to the Ibos, was published by Northcote Thomas in his *Anthropological Report on the Ibo-speaking Peoples of Nigeria* (Part 3, 1913). Although Thomas dismisses this story as "an Ibo translation of the western fairy tale" (quoted in Tehrani 2013: n.p.) and thus not of local origin, it is still worthwhile for learners to know that such a translated version exists as part of the colonial record. The story is also evidence of how ethnic groups at the turn of the twentieth century, in certain regions of the continent, participated in knowledge production, albeit through storytelling that might have resulted from contacts with strangers. This version of "Little Red Riding Hood," in other words, remains an Ibo rendition and so is distinct in that way, just like the numerous European adaptations that populate classroom bookshelves. Asked why story origins matter at an interview with Rachel Shea, Tehrani replies that, "[w]e would regard folktales as a marker of human history showing how different societies have interacted with one another and how people have moved around the world" (Shea 2013: n.p.). This sums it all up; for Africa was never a dark continent waiting for Europeans to enlighten its people as popular literary works from the West assume. The relationship has always been one with the potential for mutual benefits. However, because of the Western obsession with hierarchy, knowledge sharing with the continent is downplayed, and Europeans are projected as the ones with knowledge worthy of everyone's attention. This is reinforced by curriculum designs at institutions of learning where, as Giroux asserts, "[p]ower and control ... are exercised through a formal corpus of knowledge which the school distributes through curriculum ... [and which confers] cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups" (1983; cited in Kanu 2003: 71). Educators do not need to think too hard to understand the socio-cultural ramifications of an ideology that consistently legitimizes only certain knowledge and ways of knowing in the classroom.

In this era of modern globalization there is a great need for us to begin to learn to trust one another despite our well-grounded histories of mistrust. Curricular reforms can aid us in this endeavor, "making cultural inquiry very important in contemporary understandings of educational reform, especially as reform relates to social inclusion and exclusion, and to the relation of knowledge and power" (Kanu 2003: 70). Working together to democratize the curriculum so that discrete cultural voices can co-exist within it is a good first step toward negotiating the centuries of distrust that have resulted from colonial and imperial expansionist ideologies, which continue to condition people to rank and value European ways of knowing and being over indigenous ways.

As I have demonstrated above, a literary curriculum that is inclusive of global tales, and that doesn't measure international tales against a Eurocentric standard, can assist us in a project of deimperialization. If we agree with Santome that:

[a]s human beings, it is becoming more and more obvious that we have more in common with each other: more shared dreams, ideals, fears, impediments, and obstacles; that we are, and should be, equal; and that our differences should serve to enrich us rather than to rank us, isolate us, and pit us against each other.

(2016: 524)

Does it not make sense for us to commit to co-exist in ways that reflect egalitarian principles? We must therefore actively and collectively resist the ongoing “westernization of the world” (Mignolo, 2016b) which I believe is being perpetuated through fairy tales too.

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PART III

THE AMERICAS





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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MYTHS AND FOLKTALES IN LATIN AMERICA

John Bierhorst

The indigenous narratives collected in Latin America are generally called myths, distinguishing them from their Hispanic counterparts, usually called folktales (a term that corresponds to the more technical *Märchen*). Either, more informally, may be called stories or simply tales.

A signal feature of this lore, despite the dominance of Hispanic language and culture, is that the preferred identification, especially in novels, poetry, and politics, leans heavily toward the indigenous side. In comparison with North America, where the nineteenth-century influence of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha* was sputtering out, the Indianist movement in Latin America was rapidly gathering steam as the twentieth century got underway. Increasingly this movement incorporated not merely indigenous themes but actual myths. This was especially true in Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru, where the indigenous presence is strong. The influence of Hispanic folktales, meanwhile, was largely reduced to trickster tales, especially in areas where the Indian presence was minimal, for instance in Venezuela or Puerto Rico.

What follows will lay out noteworthy indigenous myths, then a sampling of Hispanic folktales, a look at the ways in which the two genres are mixed, a glance at the *indigenista* (or Indianist) movement, and, finally, various new directions reaching out to North America and Europe. It may be emphasized that this will concern myths and folktales only, and their outgrowths – not general cultural themes.

NATIVE MYTHS

Fray Ramón Pané, commissioned by Columbus in 1493 to investigate the beliefs of the Taino of Hispaniola, was the first to record myths in the New World. One of the best known tells of the ocean, which was originally trapped in a gourd; when the gourd broke, water “filled the whole earth, and with it issued many fish” (Pané 1906: 17). Not recorded again for some 400 years, its distribution was eventually found to be far flung, stretching from Argentina to Costa Rica (Bierhorst 2002a: 80, 67, 121, 175; 2002b: 81).

But the time depth of indigenous myths can be glimpsed more impressively from native records – for example, painted vases. According to the modern Tacana

of Bolivia, in the ancient time “pots, grating boards, weapons, and other utensils rebelled against the people and devoured them” (Bierhorst 2002a: 222). Some say this occurred during an eclipse of the moon. A vase painting from the Mochica culture of Peru, 100–800 AD, shows scenes from exactly the same myth and in great detail. In the twentieth century, the story has been found not only among the Tacana but in scattered locations in both South and North America (Bierhorst 2002a: 15, 222–5).

The Revolt of the Utensils occurs as well in the *Popol Vuh* (Council Book), the so-called bible of native America, written down in the 1500s by Quiche Maya scribes, using the alphabetic script learned from missionaries. Briefly, it tells of the first four attempts to create humans, followed by the deeds of the heroes Hunahpu and his brother Xbalanque, and finally a fifth creation, followed by the dawning of the sun and the rise of the Quiche nation. The revolt of the “water jars ... plates ... cooking pots [and] grinding stones” against the beings of the fourth creation sets the stage for the arrival of Hunahpu and Xbalanque, whose adventures in the underworld are shown, in part, on a Maya vase dated 600–900 AD (Tedlock 1996: 72, 134–5).

Of course, stories also reach into the past through traditions of undoubted age recorded by Spaniards. It is said, for instance, that on the eve of the conquest of Mexico a woman went wandering at night, crying, “My children!” This has been connected with the famous legend of “La Llorona” (the weeping woman), still heard in versions from Los Angeles to Panama (Bierhorst 1984: 140; Bierhorst 2002b: 173).

In the 1500s *la llorona* was identified as the Aztec earth goddess Cihuacoatl, and this points to the rationale for all the myths and legends that were recorded in the century after the Conquest: missionaries sought to understand the old beliefs in order to replace them. Thus, to cite only one instance: the colorful myth of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, who brings up bones from the underworld to create the present race of humans was replaced by Genesis 2:7 (“God formed man out of the dust of the ground”).

Not until the late 1800s, and not plentifully until the twentieth century, were the familiar novel-like myths, seemingly secular, brought to the fore. For example, it was only in this period that the tale of two brothers, or a father and a son, who climb a tree to get nestlings, the so-called “Birdnester” myth with its plot of desiring a woman and a man’s betrayal, was revealed in Brazil and Peru with a disjunct cluster in western North America (Bierhorst 2002a: 95; Barriaes 1983: myth 13).

Another, more widespread story, collected minimally in the 1550s though not again (and not fully) until the twentieth century, is the famous “Twin Myth,” now revealed to occur throughout South America from Argentina to Colombia and with a remote (but recognizable) disjunct cluster in North America (Bierhorst 2002a: 15). In a Tenetehara version from Brazil a pregnant woman deserted by her husband wanders to the bed of an opossum, who impregnates her a second time. She wanders on to the house of a jaguar, where her twin sons are born. After many adventures the two boys discover their real father, named Maíra, and settle with him in a “village of the gods” (Bierhorst 2002a: 12–15).

Still another myth, which may be called “The Origin of Male Domination,” is found throughout Brazil with a similar story recorded from the tribes of Tierra del Fuego. According to one of the Brazilian variants, the women, while out gathering firewood, heard strange music coming from a certain lake, from which they pulled out three trumpets (called flutes in other versions). These gave them power over the

men, who thereafter had to do the women's work, as well as hunt in order to feed the ancestor spirits that lived in the trumpets. Sensing an advantage, the men eventually refused to hunt unless the women handed over the trumpets. Not wishing to offend the spirits, the women obeyed, and from then on things were as they are now (Bierhorst 2002a: 44).

An important myth confined to Mexico is "Corn Woman's Marriage." The corn bride, actually the crop itself transformed into a woman, is abused by her husband's mother and flees to safety. Henceforth man must work the fields in order to get the crop. Another corn myth, confined to the Bribri, the Cabécar, and other tribes of lower Central America, is "The Seeds of Humanity," in which humans grow from corn kernels planted by a deity or hero.

A tale from the Peruvian Andes, harking back to the Spanish Conquest, tells of an Inca king called Inkarrí (from "Inca" and the Spanish word *rey*, meaning "king"). This millenarian legend, or myth of prophecy, concludes with the words, "only the head of Inkarrí exists; from the head it is growing downward ... toward the feet; and then he will return – if God wills it" (Bierhorst 2002a: 236).

This and most of the other narratives that have been outlined above reappear below, transformed, into poetry, novels, political harangues, and film.

HISPANIC TALES

A manuscript of the 1590s preserves a translation of Aesop's Fables into Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, though there is no record that any of it was delivered orally. Likewise, the Golden Age of Spanish literature saw frequent references to the Spanish trickster, Pedro de Urdemalas, notably in the comedic play of 1615 by Cervantes called simply *Pedro de Urdemalas*. More to the point, a Quechua tale of about 1600, in the Huarochirí manuscript from Peru, displays an unmistakably European episode found throughout Hispanic lore (Thompson 1955–1958: motif 452 Secret remedy overheard in a conversation of animals) – which will be discussed further under "The *indigenista* movement," below.

But, as with native myths, the collection of Hispanic folktales did not really get started until after the rise of modern folklore studies, and even a little later, as the twentieth century began. It soon became clear, however, that the rogue Pedro de Urdemalas was a ubiquitous feature, reappearing in countless stories: he sells a "money tree" to gullible passers-by, he trades a wooden donkey for a live stallion, and when he dies he causes so much trouble in Limbo that God sends him to Hell.

Juan Bobo, the trickster par excellence of Puerto Rican folklore, is another popular character, but one who is frequently a fool (a *bobo*) or a numbskull. He carries a borrowed needle in an enormous basket where he can never find it, he goes to bring water in a hamper and it all drains away, his mother tells him to mind the pig while she goes out, but when it squeals he thinks it wants to go too and dresses it up for the journey.

In the realm of popularity, a tale that surfaces again and again, from virtually every region, Argentina to California – also Europe, the Middle East, and India – is the ancient fable, "Good Is Repaid With Evil": a man picks up a snake nearly dead with cold, and warms it, only to be bitten incurably; dying he laments, "I suffer what I deserve for showing pity to the wicked." The fable, though it is not among the 47

in the Nahuatl manuscript mentioned above, nevertheless belongs to the Aesopic collection (Perry 1984: 187; Brotherston, Kutscher, and Vollmer 1987).

Equally rooted in Europe, through to India, and widespread in Latin America, is The Horse of Seven Colors (Uther 2004: type 530 “The Princess on the Glass Mountain,” with Thompson 1955–1958: motif B401 “Helpful Horse” – except that it is a Latin American requirement that the horse be of “seven colors”). In a Venezuelan version, a young boy endures one ordeal after another at the hands of his two older brothers, and finally, with the help of his magic horse – of “seven colors” – wins a princess in marriage and, forgiving as always, invites his two brothers and his old father to live with him, free of punishment.

Another significant tale, found everywhere from Argentina to Puerto Rico to California – and all the way to India – is “The Dragon Slayer” (Uther 2004: type 300). But in a Mexican version the “hero” is female. Role reversal of this kind is in fact a recurring and striking feature of Latin American folk narratives. Among these the female dragon slayer who rescues a prince in distress is surely the most unexpected. But the widow who liberates three princesses and becomes the general of the king’s armies is a close second (“Judas’s Ear” from New Mexico, Uther 2004: type 301 “The Three Stolen Princesses”).

MIXED LORE

A mere sampling of what would qualify today as an urban legend is provided by Columbus’s *Diario* of 1492–1493: “to the south there was a king who had ... much gold,” he writes, mentioning also “rings of gold,” “bracelets of gold,” and “banners of gold” (Dunn and Kelley 1991: 71–83, 273). Such tales of extravagant riches were no doubt often manufactured on the spot to match Spanish expectations as even Columbus suspected, but hands-down credibility was supplied by the conquest of Montezuma in 1521 and subsequently the Inca, Atahualpa. Convinced that there were further conquests of this type to be made, search parties fanned out through the jungles in all directions. Then, in the 1620s, Fray Pedro Simón recorded a Chibcha story from Colombia that merged with the tales already elicited, becoming the legend of “El Dorado.” It seems that a chieftain, his body dusted with gold powder, was bathed each year in a sacred lake as a sacrifice of thanks to the gods (Simón 1891: 242–3). Searchers, then, became focussed on finding this “golden man,” which in turn morphed into a fabulous place: *El Dorado*.

Considerably less exciting have been the reworkings of ordinary folktales to incorporate the American scene. Such are the introduction of a “tapir” switch into a Costa Rican tale, a cup of the national beverage, “mate,” into a Chilean story, or the real-life locales “Chillán,” “Constitución,” “Alameda,” into a variety of Hispanic tales, also from Chile (Bierhorst 2002c: 334, 341, 345). More substantial mixing occurs in an episodic El Salvador cycle, beginning with a story of either Hispanic or African provenience in which a witch wife removes her head each night – ending with an account of the origin of corn (Bierhorst 2002c: 356).

Other tales, especially from Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru, where native populations have long been exploited by wealthy landowners, or *patrones*, have been recast from Hispanic originals concerning kings, queens, and princesses, making them fit the workaday environment. In “The Pongo’s Dream,” for example, a *pongo* (a Quechua

menial of the lowest order) tells his *patrón* of a dream he has had of licking excrement from the landowner's body; while an Old World version has the same story but with a jester telling his dream to the king (Bierhorst 2002c: 341).

We turn now to one of the jewels of Latin American folklore, the *doctrina* cycle. Firmly embedded in the bible, it illustrates the Catholic doctrine of sin and redemption, starting with the Creation, moving on to the Fall, the Flood, the Nativity, the Passion, and finally the Redemption. But the folkloric versions are filled with noncanonical details from medieval legends, as well as indigenous elements. The cycle has dropped out of the Hispanic repertory and is told only by native storytellers. Moreover, the idea of sin being redeemed by Christ is completely lost, replaced by an elaborate sequence emphasizing freedom from persecution.

The cycle swells when it comes to catching Christ, who constantly escapes his pursuers bent on crucifixion. As he races over the countryside, he thinks of one stratagem after another to elude capture. In a cognate medieval European tale, "Christ and the Farmer," Christ comes to a man planting a field and asks, "What are you doing?" "Planting stones!" says the farmer sarcastically, and the moment Christ has passed, the farmer's field becomes filled with stones. When the pursuers come along they ask if he has seen Christ. "Well, yes, a man came by and asked what I was doing. I said I was planting stones – and now my whole cornfield is nothing but stones!" "Will you help us chase Christ?" they said, and he joined them right away. The story now is told from Mexico to Paraguay (Dähnhardt 1909: 95–7; Bierhorst 2019).

From the Maya of Guatemala comes an episode adapted from the *Popol Vuh* (where it is told of the heroes Hunahpu and Xbalanque): when Christ was a prisoner his guards thought he was smoking in jail, imagining they saw the end of a lighted cigar; but it was not he, it was only a firefly, and Christ had already fled (Bierhorst 2002c: 213).

The stories of Christ's pursuit may even be repeated for their entertainment value, ending with "I pulled my tale from a basket, tell me another if I ask it" (Bierhorst 2002c: 346; 2019).

THE *INDIGENISTA* MOVEMENT

The movement, or its theme, has preoccupied the Hispanic population going back to the early 1600s, and involves using indigenous material, genuine or not, to celebrate the native community. No longer threatened, Hispanics around 1600 stopped treating native myth as a liability and considered it an asset. The historian Alva Ixtlilxóchitl looked at the difficult Aztec poetry that had been recorded in the 1500s and extracted an erroneous biography of the "poet-king" Nezahualcoyotl (Bierhorst 2009: 12–13, 20–32), reading into one of the songs a variant of the story of Bathsheba and the poet-king David: Nezahualcoyotl takes a married woman for himself and murders her husband (Garibay 1965: 10; Bierhorst 2009: 132–3). Contradictorily, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl proposed that the fifteenth-century warrior king – Nezahualcoyotl – was a composer of songs "of much morality," thereby initiating a tradition among Mexicanists that is still going strong (Bierhorst 2009: 12).

Similarly, in 1649 the Mexican cleric Laso de la Vega penned in Nahuatl the now-famous story of a poor Indian named Juan Diego, who receives fresh roses from the Virgin of Guadalupe (although it is December) and petitions the bishop

to build a church in her honor (Bierhorst 2009: 14). Over the years the story has become an unshakable document, despite a current of doubt, well attested in *El mito guadalupano*, (1981; *The Myth of the Virgin of Guadalupe*, 1987), by the irreverent cartoonist Rius (Eduardo del Rio). Constantly reprinted, this little book was sold in grocery stores throughout Mexico in the last years of the twentieth century. In a completely different vein, in Peru in the 1960s, politicians began making stirring promises to win votes: “*Campesino!* The *patrón* will no longer eat off your poverty!” “Inkarri is here!” (Bierhorst 2002a: 238, 262). In this case the story – of Inkarrí – was certifiably indigenous, though the promise was no more realistic.

When myth collecting became serious business at the beginning of the 1900s, and stories became available, novelists and poets picked up the material and wove it into their own work. The result now became part of what was known officially as the *indigenista*, or Indianist movement, especially in Peru, Mexico, and Central America, forming an element of the so-called “magic realism” practiced widely by Latin American novelists. Among poets the most prominent to use myth has been the Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal, whose *Homenaje a los indios americanos* (1972; *Homage to the American Indians*, 1973), *Quetzalcóatl* (1985), and *Los ovinis de oro* (1988; *The Golden UFOs*, 1992) may be cited. The volume *Quetzalcóatl*, naturally, includes the celebrated myth of the god-hero’s descent to the underworld:

... He went there to bring back the bones of men ...
The bones of man and woman were together.
He sprinkled them with the blood of his penis.
And they revived ...

(Cardenal 1994: 11)

Among novels, *Maíra* (1978) by the Brazilian Darcy Ribeiro takes its main plot from “The Twin Myth,” outlined above. In Ribeiro’s story a woman from Rio de Janeiro becomes the mother of the twins; the fictional Mairun tribe is her house of the jaguar; and the story is told in part by the elder god Maíra.

The increasing sophistication of the *indigenista* movement reached its peak in two works by Peruvian novelists José María Arguedas – *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, (1971; *The Fox From Up Above and the Fox From Down Below*, 2000) – and Mario Vargas Llosa – *El hablador*, (1987; *The Storyteller*, 1989). The first of these makes use of a Quechua tale, of mixed lore, from Chapter 5 of the Huarochirí manuscript, ca. 1600:

The god Huatyacuri overhears a fox from below (the coast) and a fox from above (the highlands) telling of a local rich man who pretends to divine power, but who is incurably ill – by reason of his wife’s adultery. Huatyacuri then goes to the man, promising a cure if he will give him his daughter in marriage. He restores his health (recalling the remedy he had heard from the foxes) (Thompson 1955–1958: motif 452, see “Hispanic tales,” above) by removing a snake from the roof of the house and toads from the floor – emblems of the wife’s adultery. He then triumphs in a series of son-in-law tests (Thompson 1955–1958: motifs 310–359 suitor tests), and the wife becomes a stone while the man himself is changed into a deer (Arguedas 1966: 34–9).

The novel, which remains unfinished, is set in Chimbote, a coastal town transformed in the 1960s by the fishmeal boom. Quechua people come down from the *highlands* to work there and are corrupted by the modernity of the *coast*. The *foxes* who intrude with comments are able to do nothing more than just that. Interlarded are diary entries in which Arguedas reveals his plans to commit suicide. Finally, he breaks off writing and in desperation shoots himself on November 29, 1969, tragically dying three days later.

Vargas Llosa, in his novel *El hablador* (The Storyteller), alternates, as Arguedas had done, between two voices, in this case an outcast narrator and a skeptical commentator. The outcast goes to the jungles of eastern Peru to become the storyteller of the Machiguenga tribe, using myths published earlier by Padre Joaquín Barriaes. In much fleshed out retellings, the outcast recounts six of Barriaes's 17 published stories (the numbers are Barriaes's, the order is Vargas Llosa's): 2 (Moon Establishes Cassava Gardening), 12 (Origin of a Comet), 11 (First Woman Changed to Salt), 16 (First Woman's Marriages), 3 (The Man Who Became a Deer), and 5 (Smallpox Woman Wreaks Havoc). A brief sample will give some idea of the method:

In the ancient time there was no cassava, maize, or plantains.
They ate red earth, which was for making pots.
They toasted it also.
A woman lived hidden by her father.
She was alone when she saw a big man coming.
He was the Moon.

(Barriaes 1979: myth 2, paragraphs 1–6)

And in Vargas Llosa's retelling:

A strong, serene youth, Moon was bored in the sky up above, the *inkite*, where as yet there were no stars. The people ate earth instead of cassava and plantains. It was their only food. Moon came down the river Meshiarení, paddling with his arms, without a pole. The canoe dodged whirlpools and rocks. Down it came, floating. The world was still in the dark and much wind blew. It rained torrents. At the *oskiaje*, where the earth joined the sky and monsters lived and all the rivers go to die, Moon jumped ashore. He looked around him. He didn't know where he was but he was content. He began to walk. Soon he saw, seated, weaving a mat, softly singing a song to keep away snakes, the Machiguenga girl who would bring him happiness and unhappiness.

(Vargas Llosa 1987: 128; translation by author)

At the close of the novel, the outcast storyteller has become comfortable in his new life, but the skeptical commentator is not quite willing to cede the matter, saying, "it shatters my heart with greater force than fear or love has ever done" (Vargas Llosa 1987: 234).

Unwittingly both Arguedas and Vargas Llosa became embroiled in controversy. Arguedas, in view of his extended career as a novelist and collector of Quechua folklore, was accused of turning back the clock to a romantic Indian past (Sá 2004: 254–9, 275; Zapata 2011), and Vargas Llosa, more narrowly, in regard to *The Storyteller*,

of speeding it up to abolish authentic Indianness (Sá 2004: 251–4). To be fair, each in his own way has proved to be a well-intentioned, if old fashioned, interpreter of indigenous texts.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The last years of the twentieth century saw an explosion of children's books on Latin American myths and folktales to match the rising Latino population of the US. By no means absent among the hundreds of tales told and retold is the story of the ocean's origin, taken directly from Ramón Pané's *Relación* of the 1490s, titled in the new tellings "How the Sea Began" or "How the Sea Was Born." Even more popular in the children's field are tales of the tricksters Pedro de Urdemalas and Juan Bobo. Countless books have been published featuring one or the other of these two scapegraces. Juan Bobo in particular has been the subject not only of books, but songs, riddles, comics, and an internet blog (juanbobo.org). In academic discourse he looms large, viewed as a kind of Puerto Rican David opposed to the Goliaths of the world beyond (Rodríguez 2007). And the tale of Juan Bobo and the basket (see above) has even been turned into a statue in San Juan, installed by Danish sculptor Lindsay Daen in 1998.

In 1964 Claude Lévi-Strauss launched his monumental survey of South American mythology with *Le cru et le cuit* (*The Raw and the Cooked*, 1969), beginning with a Birdnester myth from the Bororo of Brazil designated the "key myth" of the entire four-volume study. The desired woman in this case is the hero's mother, and his rival is his father, the one who sends him up the tree, removes the ladder, and leaves him stranded aloft – a narrative that has been analyzed, discussed, and critiqued on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1978, in his novel *Maíra*, Ribeiro, tipped his hat to Lévi-Strauss in a single passage: "We live divided according to rules of yes and of no; of heat and of cold; of luck and of hazard; of life and of death; of joy and of pain; of raw and of cooked," and it is probable that *The Raw and the Cooked* helped pave the way for *Maíra*'s wide acceptance in Europe in the early 1980s and its publication in the US in 1984.

"La Llorona" surfaces yet again in an elaborate version collected in 1961 where the weeping woman is a seamstress who falls in love with a prince and bears him two sons. When he abandons her for a princess she takes a dagger and kills the two boys and herself. Now her ghost wanders along riverbanks wailing inconsolably (apparently this derives from a literary version by the nineteenth-century poet, Vicente Riva Palacios) (Horcasitas and Butterworth 1963: 209). Thirty years later, in 1991, a story by the North American Chicana writer Sandra Cisneros recasts *la llorona* as a woman of strength – not unlike the old native goddess or earth spirit – who, though wounded, fights back (Cisneros 1991).

Perennially popular, *La Llorona*, or *The Wailer*, was a full-length film in 1933, again in 1960, and once again in 2006. Since 2000 she has been the subject of a song, a comic book, and a TV series.

Popol Vuh was also a film several times, and the text itself (in Quiche Maya) has been translated into German, French, Russian, Italian, and Japanese, not to mention Spanish and English.

These developments, naturally, occur outside the control of native communities. But as the twentieth century came to a close indigenous people began to participate in global concerns, linking their traditional myths with international currents. In the

year 2000, taking advantage of environmentalism and calls for religious freedom, the Huichol of central Mexico, with help from the World Wildlife fund, succeeded in doubling the size of the Huiricuta Natural and Cultural State Reserve. A refuge for endangered species, Huiricuta is also a “religious use” area, recognized as the place of origin for the Huichol trickster Kauyumari and, according to one version of the story, the homeland of the corn bride, the heroine of “Corn Woman’s Marriage.”

In Costa Rica a new version of “The Seeds of Humanity,” published by the Bribri and Cabécar tribes in cooperation with the North American-based organization Cultural Survival, incorporated late-twentieth-century multiculturalism. The new myth explained that in ancient times the seeds that gave rise to humans were of “different colors.” Additional new tales from the same source explained that the forests are “the lungs of the earth” and that “there are sacred places in the forest that must not be touched” (Bierhorst 2016: 567). These stories were published in small books during the 1980s and 1990s and helped to stimulate charitable giving in Europe and North America for the purpose of buying inholdings in the native reserves (Bierhorst 2016: 571).

Further south, the Erikbaktsá of western Brazil invited an anthropologist to film their version of the ritual that is linked to The Origin of Male Domination. As they are aware, the ritual among their neighbors is a male exercise in which the men play the flutes in order to intimidate the women. But their own current view, as knowingly expressed by a spokesman facing the camera, is that “Both women and men experience hardships in life, so women must not be excluded from playing the sacred flutes.” Released in 1999, the film, or videotape, now has a role to play beyond the confines of folklore.

Just the opposite idea was enshrined in the “charter” myth of the Yanomami collected by anthropologist Nicholas Chagnon in the 1960s: in the ancient time, Moon would eat the souls of children, causing great distress among the mythical tribesmen of those early days; therefore one of the ancestor spirits shot him in the belly with an arrow, and his blood falling to earth created mortal men (not women); thus men are naturally violent and warlike – as in fact the *waiteri*, or “ferocity,” of Yanomami males abundantly attests.

Inhabiting the Venezuela-Brazil border region, the Yanomami are the last major indigenous group to be fully contacted. Yet in 1991 a group of Yanomami started a political action project of their own. In an interview the project’s spokesman, Davi Kopenawa, arguing for the demarcation of an off-limits Yanomami reserve, rejected Chagnon’s characterization of his people as endemically violent:

We [Yanomami] are all friends. Disputes are rare, and when someone is killed, it does not lead to fighting year after year. The whites are saying this against us because they don’t want to make our reserve ... they are afraid of us ... the whites who speak this way are afraid that they might lose. They think the Yanomami are like them.

(Bierhorst 2002a: 247–8, 263, 273)

Meanwhile, in keeping with the Bribri, the Cabécar, the Erikbaktsá, and the Yanomami, historians and *littérateurs* continue to celebrate the “poetry” of Nezahualcoyotl, an

actual king of the 1400s – but steeped in those Aztec values that are shocking to modern sensibilities. There have been rumblings over Nezahualcoyotl's "poetic" accomplishments, and one is reminded of the observation, made in a different context by anthropologist Marvin Harris: "A majority of Aztec scholars follow the lead of Mexico's tourist agency and try ... to sentimentalize cruelty" (1985: 227).

And in Rome the gentle Juan Diego, with his roses in December, was beatified in 1990 and canonized in 2002, while the basilica of Guadalupe on the outskirts of Mexico City is now the world's major center of pilgrimage for Roman Catholics. Throughout Latin America the Hispanic *indigenista* novel and the poetry that rehearses myth have been brought low by a growing chorus of native voices: they don't wish to be spoken for, they wish to speak for themselves. The old myths then die, and new ones, not always credentialed, take their place as the fabulous continues to insinuate its presence in Latin America, spreading perplexity and enchantment throughout the region and the rest of the world.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE POLITICS AND POETICS OF MÄRCHEN IN HAWAIIAN-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS



Marie Alohalani Brown

To date, only a handful of scholars have published critical works on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hawaiian-language translations of *Märchen*, and their findings demonstrate the value of such investigations (Schweizer 1988; Bacchilega and Arista 2007; Hughes 2009; Kuwada 2009). This essay makes four main contributions. First, prior works on the topic only offered a partial list of Hawaiian-language translations of *Märchen*, which is unsurprising given the logistical and methodological difficulties of researching them. I discuss these challenges, and then provide an updated list (with the exception of *Arabian Nights*' tales which, given the volume of material in terms of number and length of serialized tales, require a separate study). Second, I examine the politics surrounding the publication and reception of European wonder tales and Hawaiian *ka'ao*. The narrative genre termed *ka'ao* merits a much longer explanation than I can afford it here, but for my aims, I define them as “wonder tales” (see Brown 2016: 8–9, 15–20, 27–9). Third, I examine the plots and themes of the first three *Märchen* published in the press between 1861 and 1862 as part of a project to “civilize” Hawaiians. Fourth, I discuss a *Märchen* published two weeks after the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893, which I suspect the newspaper editor printed to express his contempt towards her.

MÄRCHEN IN HAWAIIAN-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS: METHODS AND FINDINGS

Any systematic investigation of Hawaiian-language newspapers is a time-consuming and painstaking process. To begin, scholars must comb through abundant material. Approximately 100 Hawaiian-language newspapers were established between 1834 and 1948. Some were in press for a year or less while others lasted more than 60 years (Mookini 1974: 1–41). Their publication frequency ranged from daily, semi-weekly, weekly, to monthly, and depending on their content and format, fall into these categories: evangelical organs, government press, independent and nationalist gazettes, literary periodicals, bulletins, newsletters, or magazines (Mookini 1974: iii). More than 100,000 pages were produced (Kuwada 2009: 81); however, page and font size differed greatly. While 100,000 pages is impressive, were we to reformat them in

word documents (eight-by-ten inches, one-inch margins, size-twelve font, and double-spaced), the number of pages would surpass a million (Nogelmeier 2010: xiii). A great many newspapers and their issues were microfilmed, but only 48 newspapers have so far been digitized and uploaded to electronic archives, namely, Papakilo Database and Ulukau. A good number of these pages have also undergone optical character recognition. According to Papakilo Database, its “collection contains 11,934 issues comprising 58,612 pages, and 379,918 articles” (see “About the Papakilo Database” on the Papakilo Database site).

Despite these valuable technological advances, researching Hawaiian-language newspapers is still challenging. To begin, for scholars to rightfully claim that they have undertaken an exhaustive study of any topic, they would have to read every single page of surviving issues – including those not digitized – a lifetime project. However, a systematic investigation of the digital archives yields an impressive number of findings, more than enough to carry out a rigorous study. When researching *Märchen* a translation-related issue arises when searching for them by name or title (Cinderella, Cenerentola, Cendrillon), or by genre marker (fairy tale, *Märchen*, *féé*). Only once did a translator opt to keep the protagonist’s name from the source language in the title (J.W. “Cinderella”). Normally, they transliterated the protagonist’s name (Kinisarella for Cinderella), but transliteration was by no means uniform (Cinikalela for Cinderella). In other cases, translated names were uniquely Hawaiian (Kahaunani or “The Beautiful Snow” for Snow White). In the case of *Arabian Nights*’ tales, contributors translated titles, but a handful kept “Arabian Nights.”

My solution was to search for genre markers used to introduce the *Märchen* I had encountered in the last decade as I researched other topics in the newspapers. Here, I should point out that Hawaiian diacritics were not in use until after the newspapers ended, thus I did not include them in my search. By far, “kaao” was the most common. Notably, translators rarely used “mo’olelo” (hi/story) alone, but added a qualifier, such as “ka’ao” (“mo’olelo ka’ao” and “mo’oka’ao”) or “ho’onanea” (“mo’olelo ho’onanea” or “enjoyable story”). A Papakilo Database search yielded these results: 9,234 for “kaao”; 1,340 for “moolelo hoonanea”; and 19 for “mookaao.” However, not all titles contained a genre marker, such as J.W.’s translation of “Bluebeard” titled “Umiumi Uliuli.” Fortunately, these translations often included a tag phrase, “unuhiia mailoko mai” (translated or taken from) that indicated the source language or provenance. Thus, I also searched for “unuhiia,” which yielded 3,173 results. After going through these results, I identified 33 *Märchen*. Several *Märchen* appeared more than once as either distinct translations or variants: “Beauty and the Beast” (two versions), “Bluebeard,” “Bluebird,” “Cinderella” (two versions), “Iron Hans,” “Puss in Boots,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Snow White,” “The Clever Farmer’s Daughter,” “The Fearless Prince,” “The Fisherman and His Wife” (three versions), “The Four Clever Brothers,” “The Frog Prince,” “The Glass Axe,” “The Golden Bird” (three versions), “The Golden Boy,” “The Goose Girl,” “The Handless Maiden,” “The King of the Golden Mountain,” “The Nightingale,” “The Robber Bridegroom,” “The Twelve Brothers” (two versions), “The Six Amazing Servants,” “The Water of Life,” “The Unborn Maiden,” and “Thumbelina.” I give their complete publication data in the Appendix, and I note the title of the source tale in English in each reference.

POLITICS SURROUNDING THE PUBLICATION OF EUROPEAN AND HAWAIIAN WONDER TALES IN NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY HAWAII

Vehement debates over the publication of European fairy tales and Hawaiian *ka'ao* in Hawaiian-language newspapers offer examples of colonial rhetoric and its racial undertones. These debates, which began in earnest in 1861, reveal vastly different attitudes towards European and Hawaiian wonder tales. *Märchen* were deemed appropriate literature for Hawaiians while *ka'ao* were criticized because they were rife with pagan beliefs and practices. As I will show, ethnocentricity and religious bias are clearly behind this discrepancy in attitudes.

Beginning with the arrival of the first company of American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions in 1820, missionaries campaigned to Christianize Hawaiians, which soon transformed into a civilizing project. Introducing Hawaiians to Western (European and American) literature, including *Märchen*, was a part of this scheme. The catalyst of these debates was the rivalry between *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* (The Independent Newspaper) and *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* (The Star of the Pacific). Henry Martyn Whitney, whose parents were in the first company of American missionaries, owned and ran the paper, which missionaries partially subsidized (Silva 2004: 70). The latter paper was the first press entirely owned and run by Hawaiians, and its founding editor was J.W.H. Kauwahi (Silva 2004: 55, 56). Later, Kauwahi appointed other editors, such as G.W. Mila ("Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika" January 9, 1862), and S.N. Hale'ole (Untitled editorial March 27, 1862). Both papers published European and Hawaiian wonder tales, but *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* received by far the most criticism for publishing *ka'ao*.

On October 1, 1861, in the inaugural issue of *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*, Whitney presented a summary of its aims and value. This mission statement, published in Hawaiian and English, clearly portrayed Hawaiians as inferior to the whites, and furthermore, unapologetically declared the paper's colonial project. According to Whitney, the paper's driving purpose was the "dissemination of foreign ideas, both as regards mode of life, habits, business and industry; with a view to improve, expand and elevate the native mind; that the native may rise to an equality with foreigners." He reiterates, "[i]n short, it will endeavor to furnish from week to week such reading matter as may tend to develop and enlarge the Hawaiian mind, and enable Hawaiians to think, feel, act and live more like foreigners" ("The Independent Press"). Whitney would uphold the paper's unabashedly colonial objectives for 43 years until his death in 1904. After his passing, the paper remained in print until December 29, 1927; at which point it had been published uninterrupted for 66 years, making it the longest-running newspaper.

Missionaries controlled the press for four decades (Silva 2004: 54). During that time (and well after), newspapers barraged Hawaiian subscribers with commentary about their many failings as a people (57–63). But this changed in 1861 when a small group of Hawaiians came together and established *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* (55). On September 26, 1861, in its inaugural issue, the paper began a serialized account of a cultural hero Kawelo, contributed by S.K. Kawailiula. The first installment took up the entire first page, which I interpret as a clear statement regarding Hawaiian narratives – Hawaiians should be proud of their traditions, which are worth celebrating and remembering.

On February 6, 1862, the editors of the *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* informed their subscribers that the *Advertiser* had accused them of publishing a story (“Kawelo”) that contained “olelo pelapela” (obscene language), and Whitney, the *Advertiser*’s editor, was the culprit (Kamoana “He wahi”). The offensive phrase was “ke ino o ka lemu” (the bad smell of the buttocks). In the editors’ opinion, Whitney did this so that white foreigners would cancel their subscriptions because it was lewd and impure. Moreover, the editors noted, Hawaiians supported their paper, and because Whitney felt threatened by their success, he was sabotaging them. Although Whitney tried to shut down the *Hoku o ka Pakipika* with the excuse that “Kawelo” contained lewd language, he soon realized that he could increase his readership if he published Hawaiian narrative genres. His change in heart did not go unnoticed.

THE HAWAIIAN WONDER TALE “LAIEIKAWAI”

In this section, I offer an extended discussion about the politics surrounding the publication of the Hawaiian wonder tale about Lā‘ieikawai focusing upon what it reveals about the discrepancy in attitudes towards European and Hawaiian wonder tales. Moreover, it provides the context for my critical analysis of the first three *Märchen* Whitney published. Briefly, the story of Lā‘ieikawai runs as follows: a high-ranking chief who rules over part of O‘ahu informs his highborn wife that their first born must be a boy. Until she gives birth to a boy, any female children will be killed immediately after birth. She bears four daughters one after another, and all of them are killed. When she becomes pregnant again, however, she asks her kahuna for help and thus manages to save her children, twin daughters, Lā‘ieikawai and Lā‘ielohelohe. The first goes with Waka, a woman who has great powers, and the second goes with the kahuna. Both foster parents go into hiding. Waka raises Lā‘ieikawai under taboo on Hawai‘i Island, marking her as destined for a high-ranking husband. Waka builds a house for her charge made entirely of feathers, and Lā‘ieikawai sleeps on a bed of birds that hover in the air as she sleeps. A great reptile deity also guards the area where she lives, and magical helpers assist her. Lā‘ieikawai grows up into a very beautiful woman, and men who have heard of her beauty try to woo her, albeit unsuccessfully. When Waka finally arranges a union for her, a trickster pretends to be the suitor, sleeps with Lā‘ieikawai, then abandons her. Waka is furious with Lā‘ieikawai for not following her instructions, and also abandons her. At this point, five divine sisters who have become companions of Lā‘ieikawai arrange a marriage for her with one of their brothers, but this union too is unlucky for he proves unfaithful; in fact, he sleeps with her twin. In the end, Lā‘ieikawai is transformed into a goddess.

In 1862, the competition between *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* and *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* came to a head when they both published the story about Lā‘ieikawai. On March 27, *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* announced that it would publish the account later that year (untitled editorial). On September 4, the first episode appeared, which was unsigned, but as I will shortly show, belonged to S.N. Hale‘ole (“Ka Moolelo o Laieikawai”). However, the paper stopped running the story after the fourth installment (October 23, 1862). On November 22, *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* announced that it would publish “Laieikawai,” and urged people to subscribe to the paper so they could read it (“Laieikawai”). A week later, Whitney published the first episode, signed by its contributor, S.N. Hale‘ole (“Ka Moolelo o Laieikawai,” November 29, 1862).

Although the editors of *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* did not offer a statement about the matter, they did print an open letter to Hale'ole from a certain Kamoana. In this letter, Kamoana asks Hale'ole why he published "Laieikawai" in *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* when so many had criticized *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, calling it "he pepa pilau" (a filthy paper) because it published ancient stories of Hawai'i (Kamoana 1862). At one point, Kamoana even calls Hale'ole a "kipi" (traitor). Meanwhile, the editors bided their time, keeping track of what Whitney published. Hale'ole published his reply to Kamoana in *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*. In his reply, Hale'ole informed Kamoana that he had contacted the editors of *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, giving them a copy of the story and a long statement about the value of the people who preserve traditions in enlightened nations, but nearly five weeks passed before they got back to him. In short, by the time they finally decided to print "Laieikawai," Hale'ole had already given it to Whitney (S.N.H.).

On January 29, 1863, *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* published an open letter from a certain Halaaniani, who criticized the double standard by which people had judged the two papers. Halaaniani noted that attacks on *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* had died down, but also observed that those who had condemned it, and who had not understood the importance of the narratives it had published, were now praising *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* because it included "Laieikawai" and other *ka'ao*. The next month, the editors of the *Hoku o ka Pakipika* finally spoke their mind. They called out *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* because it had been publishing Hawaiian *ka'ao* and *mele* (chants, songs, odes) the content of which did not conform to the principles of fine people and morality. Moreover, Whitney had also published foreign narratives they clearly considered problematic, such as works by Lord Byron, who they noted was famous for being an adulterer, and tales from *Arabian Nights*. In fact, the editors observed, Whitney's paper was hypocritical, constantly changing its style to attract more Hawaiian subscribers. We, the editors explained, publish our traditions so that the accounts of our ancient ali'i do not disappear (untitled editorial, March 26, 1863).

Given the success of "Laieikawai," Whitney decided to take advantage of it. On March 28, 1863, he announced that his publishing house was offering a new Hawaiian book, which was none other than "Laieikawai" ("Buke Hawaii Hou!"). Significantly, "Laieikawai" was the first Hawaiian narrative to receive this honor. Whitney was the first in a long line of white foreigners who denigrated Hawaiians yet felt no qualms about appropriating our traditions for financial gain. As Cristina Bacchilega shows in *Legendary Hawai'i and the Politics of Place: Tradition, Translation, and Tourism* (2007), after the overthrow, white settlers used Hawaiian narratives to promote Hawai'i as an exotic tourist destination.

Two months after Whitney published *Laieikawai*, *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* closed after printing its last issue on May 16, but did not announce its closing. Presumably they had encountered financial difficulties, and it is natural to wonder if Whitney's crusade against them was ultimately the cause of the paper's demise.

Here, I continue with my discussion about Whitney's hypocrisy, which the publication of "Laieikawai" exemplifies. From a puritan perspective, some might find certain elements in this account scandalous, but if anyone ever wrote a letter to the newspaper to take it to task for publishing it, Whitney never printed it. A decade would pass before such a critique appeared. In 1874, Walter Murray Gibson, the owner and editor of the *Nuhou* (News), published a vitriolic editorial about two

stories Whitney published: one was “Robiana Lo” from *Arabian Nights*, the other was *Laieikawai*. While Gibson’s diatribe is problematic because it reflects his ethnocentric and religious bias, it is valuable for two reasons. First, he evaluates foreign wonder tales and Hawaiians’ reception of the same. Second, his detailed discussion of what he finds problematic about the two stories helps us to better appreciate the extent of Whitney’s hypocrisy – he tried to shut down *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* because of a *ka’ao* containing vulgar phrases but then published an equally, if not more, risqué account.

Gibson begins with a positive assessment of *Arabian Nights* and “Cinderella”:

We believe that Hawaiians would delight in such stories. We have had a good opportunity to observe the interest they took in the fairy tale of Cinderella; they rejoiced in the good fortune of the heroine, and evidently felt no disappointment at not finding any meretricious excitement in the story.

(Gibson 1874)

However, Gibson points out, a close reading of “the so-called Arabian story, named Robiana Lo,” reveals that “there is not a vestige of any character or incident belonging to the ‘Arabian Nights Entertainment’”; therefore, to claim it as such is “a base and willful falsehood” (Gibson 1874). Moreover, he states, “[i]t is a jumble of the most stupid absurdities, mingled with the grossest obscenities.” Gibson’s next statements offer insights into the ways that Hawaiians contributed to the story’s publication, and Whitney’s reason for publishing it, despite being advised against it:

There can be no plea of ignorance in regard to the publication of this story. The publisher was born in this country; and as he says, he is assisted by well-versed Hawaiian scholars. It is impossible that he could overlook so much abomination, but he found his interest in the publication. Friends cautioned him in respect to this Robiana Lo, but his reply signified that it helped him to his circulation of five thousand.

Gibson concludes, “[i]n every native family this story has been read, and the purifying influence of the Gospel of Jesus has been utterly nugatory among a partially reformed and civilized people by this damnable propagandism of most beastly imagination.”

Gibson then turns his attention to *Laieikawai*, which he says some have touted as the “finest specimen of pure Hawaiian literature in existence,” however, he states, “it is probably the most impure, and the most stupidly nasty production that ever issued from the press of any country.” Gibson recites a long list of offensive content (including page numbers), and then concludes that “the whole tenor of the story is a tissue of infanticide, incest, interchange of women, and promiscuous intercourse, as though the story related to the actions of a herd of goats.” He ends his harangue with a question: “why labor to translate and distribute the Word of a pure God, when you spread over the land, at the same time, the filth of heathen imagination?” (Gibson 1874). Despite Gibson’s review, “*Laieikawai*” continued to enjoy a resounding success over the years: not only did newspapers republish it repeatedly, it also inspired a song (1888), a waltz (1899), an opera (1902, 1924), and a play (2015) (here, I am indebted to ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui for sharing her research on this topic).

MÄRCHEN AS (UN)SUITABLE LITERATURE FOR WHITNEY'S "CIVILIZING" PROJECT

Anyone familiar with *Märchen* knows they reflect the range of human experience – from the sublime to the salacious. Although some criticized *ka'ao* for their questionable content, and others defended them, there is little in the newspapers to suggest those who condemned *ka'ao* were aware that some *Märchen* might be similarly controversial. In this section, I draw attention to themes in the first three *Märchen* Whitney published, which from a puritanical perspective, should be problematic. The plots and themes I discuss belong to these translations.

As in "Laieikawai," infanticide (or the threat of it) drives the plot of "The Twelve Brothers." The first line informs readers that there once lived a king and queen who had 12 sons. In the second, readers learn that the queen is expecting their thirteenth child, and that the king has threatened to kill their sons if this child is a girl so that she alone will inherit their wealth and rule the kingdom. Here, it comes naturally to wonder why Whitney, in his quest to "civilize" Hawaiians and make them more like white foreigners, would publish wonder tales in which the threat or actuality of infanticide drives the plot. This point is even more relevant given the ill-founded claims that infanticide was rampant in Hawaiian culture (Bingham 1855: 368).

Murderous intentions also characterize "Snow White." Snow White's stepmother, jealous of her beauty, orders a huntsman to lead Snow White into the forest, kill her, and then cut out her heart as proof that he has carried out her command. In a culture that cherishes children, and in which adoption, for many reasons, was a traditional and widespread practice, Hawaiians would undoubtedly find the idea of mistreating step-children dismaying. Given that many Hawaiian subscribers who read this tale would have also read Whitney's mission statement, I wonder if any of them scoffed at his claims that white foreigners were superior to them.

"The Frog Prince," derived from "The Frog Prince, or Iron Heinrich" in the Grimms' collection, is problematic for similar reasons. A princess promises the frog who retrieved her golden ball from a deep pond that she would be, as he asks, his partner and playmate, and eat from the same plate and sleep in the same bed with him. The princess attempts to renege on her promise, but her father, the king, obliges her to keep it. When the princess and the frog retire to her room for the night, she throws it against the wall, which kills it. Where the dead frog lies on the floor appears a handsome prince whom the princess then marries. In short, readers might conclude, the princess lacks morals. She is a promise-breaker and has no qualms about killing the creature who has retrieved her most precious possession.

FISHWIVES, QUEENS, AND THE NOT-SO-HAPPILY-EVER-AFTER

On January 16, 1893, a small group of missionary descendants and white businessmen, with the help of the American warship Boston, overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani. The first few days after the overthrow were tumultuous. Newspapers reported that the provisional government had declared martial law and urged citizens to remain calm. As the many editorials in the nationalist press show, Hawaiians were distressed that naturalized foreigners had overthrown the Queen. Deeply worried about their nation

losing its independence, they were in desperate need of hope. On January 21, 1893, *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* announced, “We will publish in our esteemed [paper] a new story carefully selected for our dear readers” (untitled editorial).

The next week, the paper published an unsigned translation of “The Fisherman and His Wife” titled “Ke Kanaka Lawaia a me Kana Ipo Aloha” (The Fisherman and His Beloved Sweetheart). If Hawaiian subscribers were looking forward to reading a story that offered a welcome distraction from their pressing concerns, they would have been sorely disappointed. The tale’s female protagonist is a woman obsessed with wealth and power, and furthermore, there is no redemption; no happily-ever-after. In her analysis of “The Fisherman and his Wife,” Maria Tatar notes that the story “may begin with ‘Once upon a time,’ but it fails to end with the social elevation and rags-to-riches trajectory associated with the fairy tale” (2004: 87). The basic structure of the tale revolves around the “fisherman’s wife escalating her demands until finally the wrath of the heavens returns her to her original social and domestic misery” (86).

Why would the paper publish such a dispiriting story at such a critical moment in Hawaiian history? Perhaps the answer lies in the paper’s political stance: Pro-American, Pro-overthrow, and Pro-annexation (Chapin 2000: 30). I suspect that Whitney published this tale as an expression of contempt for the Queen in the guise of a fairy tale that has as its female protagonist a greedy fishwife.

Because “Ke Kanaka Lawaia” is unsigned, there is no way of knowing the author’s identity. Other than the promise that a new story was imminent, the paper gave no information about the series. In this retelling, a fisherman catches and releases a fish who claims to be an enchanted prince. When he returns home and tells his wife about it she berates him for not asking it for something. She orders him to return and ask the fish for a wish. First, she wishes for a nice house. She is content for two weeks, but then she wishes to live in a stone castle. The morning after the fish grants her request, she is no longer content with just a bigger home or more land – she wants to rule the land – and so she asks to become king. By the time the fisherman returns home after asking the fish to make his wife king, she is already bored and asks him to go back to the fish because she wants to become emperor. She is emperor only for the time it takes for her husband to return before deciding that being emperor is not enough. She wants to become pope. She orders her reluctant husband to ask the fish to make her pope. Her wish granted, she goes to bed that night as pope, but remains awake, restless. At dawn, as she watches the rising of the sun, she decides she wants to rule the sun and moon. It is then that the fish becomes disgusted with her incessant desire for power and her continuous dissatisfaction with what he gave her. He punishes her by putting her back in the original, miserable dwelling she shared with her husband.

From the perspective of Queen Lili‘uokalani’s detractors, and Whitney was certainly one of these, the similarities between the fisherman’s wife and the Queen would have been striking. Tatar notes, “The fisherman’s wife, with her unbridled ambition, offers an example of the monstrosity of greed but also of feminine power. She stands in sharp contrast to her husband, the patient fisherman who is satisfied with a modest improvement in life” (87). The fisherman’s wife’s desire to rise in station may symbolize the Queen’s upward mobility. It was only due to fortuitous circumstances that Lili‘uokalani became queen. Although a noble, she inherited this position only because her brother David Kalākaua had bested Emma, widow of King Kamehameha IV, in

the election to appoint a new ruler. In turn, this election would have never happened if Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop had not refused King William Lunalilo's request to become heir to the throne after his death. Like the fisherman's wife, Lili'uokalani desired more power. But, unlike the fisherman's wife, her motivation was not greed but a desire to help her people. Lili'uokalani's attempts to increase her political power, although righteous, angered her detractors ("Revolution!" 1893; "When" 1893). The fish's disgust for the fisherman's wife's unmitigated greed mirrors the Queen's detractors' outrage, albeit unjustly. Like the fish who removes the fisherman's wife from power, these men forced Lili'uokalani to abdicate her throne, and became the new ruling power. In concluding, this might lead us to wonder which party is the true fisherman's wife?

FINAL THOUGHTS: THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF HAWAIIAN-LANGUAGE TRANSLATION OF *MÄRCHEN*

In terms of poetics and politics, the handful of published works on Hawaiian-language translations of *Märchen*, including this essay, will undoubtedly interest scholars from fairy-tale studies, translation studies, colonial studies, Indigenous studies, Hawaiian studies, and more.

Investigating their poetics contributes to the larger study of non-Western translations of wonder tales. Examining their publication context offers insights into ways that Westerners used *Märchen* as part of their "civilizing" projects generally, as well as providing a deeper understanding of settler politics and race-based rhetoric at critical points in Hawai'i's history.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Walt Disney's fairy tales



Tracey Mollet

Fairy tales have long been a source of inspiration for the animated and live action productions of the Walt Disney Studio. Even before the creation of Mickey Mouse in the late 1920s, the Laugh-O-Gram Studios produced several animated shorts based on fairy tales. In December 1937, after years of work and considerable financial strain, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* had its premiere, to popular and critical acclaim.

Now, nearly 85 years since *Snow White*'s release, the Walt Disney Studio has released 15 animated feature films based on fairy tales and children's stories, winning numerous Academy Awards for its adaptations. Furthermore, beginning with the hybrid tale *Enchanted* (2007), the studio has started a new tradition in the realm of live action fairy-tale movies, based upon the original written stories and the creations of its own fairy-tale universe. *Maleficent* (2014) and *Cinderella* (2015) contain references to the original Grimm versions of the stories, as well as character names, songs, and similar locations to their animated Disney counterparts. This has continued with the release of Bill Condon's *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and several other planned live action features. The development of live action fairy tales has also expanded to the medium of television with the success of series *Once Upon A Time* (2011), airing on the Disney owned network, ABC Television.

Scholars have had much to say regarding Disney's versions of fairy tales. Jack Zipes, Disney's staunchest critic, claims that Walt Disney "cast a spell" on the fairy tale narrative (1995: 21) and labels him a "twentieth century sanitation man" (1988: 53). Disney stands accused of infusing traditional tales with saccharine morals, and creating "airy fairy" soap operas unrelated to the great truths of life (Sayers 1965: 606). However, as Davis has argued, the main criticism laid at the door of Disney's fairy tales is their deviation from the so-called "original versions" (Davis 2003: 12): these being the canonical literary texts of the traditional stories the films draw upon, such as the Grimms' "Snow White" and "Rapunzel," Perrault's "Cinderella," Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" and "The Snow Queen" and Madame de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast."

A particular focus of this school of criticism is the notion that Disney's version of these narratives now dominates society's understanding of fairy tales. As Dorothy Hurley has suggested, "such is the power of visual representation that children tend to

believe that Disney's version of the fairy tale is the real story rather than the 'classic' " (2005: 222). The global reach of the Walt Disney Studio gives their productions the potential power to supplant these pre-existing European fairy-tale cultures and so to remove traditional tales from their historical and national frame of reference.

Yet, while many critics have presented the Disney company's ideology and its productions as problematic (Giroux and Pollock 2010) or even "dangerous" (Ross 2004: 63), they are indisputably, enormously popular. Disney's international success since the 1930s, and especially since the Eisner era of the 1990s, is a testament to the studio's excellent quality of productions, to the popularity of the narratives they have selected to adapt into films, and to the Walt Disney Studio's unfailing ability to "keep a finger on the pulse of America" (Bell, Haas, and Sells 1995: 3). In particular, the Walt Disney Company's success has owed much to its capacity to appeal to new forms of nationalism in the US, and so to contribute to the formation of modern American society. Nicholas Sammond's work is instructive in this regard as he connects Disney's productions to the formation of a new idea of American childhood. He has argued that "Disney was represented as interceding between an ideal past and an unrealized ideal future, distilling the best impulses of that past into a digestible form that would reappear as the present corrected in that future" (2005: 366).

The present chapter will argue that Walt Disney's fairy tales played a crucial role in the re-imagining of the American Dream in the midst of the Great Depression in the 1930s. This is a central characteristic of Disney's re-telling of the story of "Snow White" in the film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* but is also apparent in every subsequent Disney fairy tale. However, as American society has transformed throughout history, the American Dream of success and happiness has also changed. These changes are echoed in Disney fairy tale narratives, so that Disney's retellings consistently reflect American cultural identity and the changing nature of American society.

DISNEY, THE DEPRESSION AND FAIRY TALES

In the 1920s, on the world stage, American industry was generally prospering, experiencing an economic boom while the war-torn countries of Europe struggled to cope with increasing demands on their economies. The American myth of success was given material backing; people believed in the Dream (Susman 1984: 179). At this time, the focus of the American Dream was on generating financial wealth and on following an individualist mentality. Anyone could be successful, providing they took charge of their own prosperity.

The Wall Street Crash on October 24, 1929, transformed the American Dream overnight. In total, 5,000 banks failed in 1930 and 13,000,000 Americans were out of work by 1933 (Kennedy 1999: 163). With the onset of financial crisis, the cultural myth of success intrinsic to the American Dream collapsed. The foundational principles of American society were further destabilized by the perceived success of Stalin's regime in the Soviet Union. The people of the US needed answers to the questions raised about their cultural myth and they looked, among other places, to the movies. Without question, the most popular productions of the 1930s were the animated short subjects of the Walt Disney Studio.

Disney's Silly Symphony *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), released in the midst of Roosevelt's Hundred Days, struck an emotional chord with the populace. It advocated

national solidarity, emphatic after Roosevelt's famous appeal to the American people. Furthermore, the short's famous song, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf," written by Frank Churchill, became a rallying cry for the battle of the public with the Depression. Disney made light of the threat and emphasized the importance of persistence and community spirit in the struggle against the evils of the Wolf. *The Three Little Pigs* promised success and better times to hardworking and honest Americans, and thus crystallized the connection between Disney animation and the American people's real-life fairy tale.

In order to analyze Disney's retellings of fairy tales, it is necessary to unpack the conventional features of these narratives. Steven Swann Jones posits that fairy tales must include "fantasy, a quest, a happy ending and an identification with the unambiguous protagonist" (1995: 12–17). Disney fairy tales combine many of these narrative elements and character traditions but also embody culturally important values inherent in the 1930s. For instance, Disney fairy tales always have a princess, but as Davis has highlighted, there are several Disney princesses that are not borne into royalty (2003), elevating the central importance of the 'rags to riches' storyline in these retellings. While many characteristics of Disney princesses have changed over time, however, their nature and temperament has not changed. Disney princesses are all as universally kind and good as Snow White, while Disney villains always embody the jealousy and superficiality of the Wicked Queen.

Zipes criticizes Disney films for exploiting the common fairy tale theme of the "triumph of the banished and the underdogs" (1995: 37) for the purposes of self-glorification; and yet, this is absolutely central to the idea of the American Dream. In the absence of riches and affluence, it seemed more important than ever that the ordinary man could still become extraordinary through his acts, as opposed to through his wealth. Given the turmoil of the Great Depression, the struggles of the ordinary man became central to American culture. Finally, Disney's 'happily ever after' always comes about through the result of honest dreaming and the desire for change. This was the overriding message of Roosevelt's New Deal and of many Disney productions in the 1930s (see, for example, *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 1934). The 'happily ever after' in Disney fairy tales is always the result of a dream of relief from the current setting, usually held by the princess, and it often comes about in a way that reflects the cultural fabric of society.

It must also be stated, however, that Disney fairy tales have faced criticism because of their projection of a "pervasive privileging of Whiteness" and "middle class values" (Hurley, 2005). According to Schickel (1968), Watts (1997) and Wasko (2001), only certain 'types' of people were given access to the Disney 'happily ever after' and were permitted to have their dreams come true due to Disney's promotion of a conservative value system. However, the fact remains that Disney films "rarely cause controversy" in dominant media outlets when they are released (Davis 2003: 234) because they are populist and mainstream in their nature. They often reflect the times into which they are released and fit neatly into similar genres and character conventions within Hollywood.

Disney's productions have always been linked to the perpetuation of cultural myth within American society and the American Dream is an integral part of that myth (Sklar 1975: 400). As Campbell and Kean have argued:

myths are the stories we tell each other as a culture in order to explain complexities and banish contradictions, thus making the world seem simpler and more comfortable to inhabit ... they are concerned with the ways in which particular images of the world are conveyed and reinforced through texts and practices.

(1997: 9)

Here, it is argued that as the American Dream has developed, and as the fabric of American society transforms, the Disney fairy tale has also been adapted to reflect these changes.

THE DISNEY PRINCESS

The central figure in the Disney fairy tale is undoubtedly the Disney princess. Rebecca Do Rozario has contended that due to “Disney’s popular and global profile ... the Disney princess is ‘the princess of all princesses’” (2004: 34). Since the release of *Snow White*, Disney’s characterization of the princess has transformed quite significantly, reflecting broader changes in the position of women in society. Scholars have differing views on the character of the Disney princess. Whelan has focused on Disney’s creation of the passive princess with *Snow White*, a figure who involves herself in domestic work throughout the film, which is used as evidence of her servitude and hence her fitness to gain love (2012). Similarly, it has been argued that *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* are reflective of the post-World War II cultural context, in which women returned to the domestic sphere after a period of liberation during the conflict (Hollows 2000; Bottigheimer 2009). However, it is perhaps more pertinent to view these princesses within the contexts of the changing nature of the American Dream, and to concentrate on the nature of their characters and their position within the narrative of the Disney fairy tale. Amy M. Davis, for example, has made the case that “Disney films reflected the attitudes of the wider society from which they emerged” (2003: 1). This proves to be the case with all characterizations of the Disney princess.

The best-selling nonfiction book of the 1930s, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie, highlighted the significance of values, behavior, and lifestyles in the culture of the decade. No longer was importance placed on material goods and wealth; success had to come from the inside. Disney’s *Snow White* was the personification of this new spirit. Her greatest weapon against the outside world proves to be the goodness of her character, which is rewarded with her rise from ‘rags to riches.’ These values are identifiable in every subsequent Disney princess. *Cinderella*, the original rags to riches princess, is instilled with this goodness and patience. This is paramount in Kenneth Branagh’s most recent retelling of this fairy tale, *Cinderella* (2015). Ella (Lily James) is told by her dying Mother (Hayley Atwell) to “have courage and be kind,” which becomes her life motto, and is even adopted by Prince Kit (Richard Madden).

With the growth of independent women in movies in the 1990s, the Disney princess’ character changes along with America. Pocahontas, Mulan, Jasmine and Belle are all strong women, with a sense of conviction. Susan Jeffords recognises Belle to be “a Disney feminist” (2016: 170) as she rejects Gaston’s advances, asking him “[w]hat do you know about my dreams?” Such rejection of the need for a handsome suitor is also present in *Pocahontas* (1995). As Davis has argued, “while it is made clear that Pocahontas truly loves John Smith ... It is also made clear that she does not need

him to be made complete” (2003: 184). She is her own woman, and remains honest and good throughout the movie. Similarly, Tiana’s sincerity and work ethic sees the goodness of the Disney princess take on new meaning. Rapunzel, Anna and Elsa are all of a similar disposition. Their characters are sincere and patient and because of this trait, they are all granted their happily ever after. These values show no sign of dissipating with Disney’s live action feature *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). Belle (Emma Watson) is gracious, kind and intelligent, continuing to infuse the Disney fairy tale with a sense of morality inherent to the ‘original’ story by de Beaumont.

However, the ‘original’ fairy tales do not develop the character of the princesses in the same way as the Disney fairy tales, thus the goodness of character comes to hold an integral position in the story, borne out of the importance of character in seeking success in life in the 1930s, the context of Disney’s original fairy tale.

THE DISNEY FAIRY TALE VILLAIN

The Wicked Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* serves as the blueprint for every subsequent Disney villain. Snow White exemplifies the 1930s values of decency and idealism but the Wicked Queen embodies superficiality, greed and individual ambition. These were the main components of the 1920s ideology that many held responsible for the Wall Street crash. Indeed, the jealousy that drives the story in the Grimm version takes visual shape in the film, through both the commentary of the Magic Mirror and the mirror’s green tint when the Queen addresses her own beauty. Again, these values intrinsic to Disney’s 1930s tale persist in Disney fairy tales of the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries. At first, the focus of this jealousy is on the princess’ physical appearance and attributes. This is particularly notable with the character of Maleficent in the original *Sleeping Beauty* animated film. Effectively, Maleficent puts an end to the gifts of beauty and song bestowed upon Aurora by the three fairies by cursing her to death on her sixteenth birthday.

In *Tangled*, Mother Gothel kidnaps Rapunzel for the magical qualities of her hair as it allows her to have eternal beauty and youth. However, in recent years, the jealousy of beauty intrinsic to the Disney villain has also extended to a jealousy of the Disney princess’ character and position, showcasing a more nuanced version of the villain. We feel sympathy for Maleficent (Angelina Jolie) in the most recent re-telling of “Sleeping Beauty,” entitled *Maleficent* (2014) as she is shown to have lost her wings on the orders of King Stefan. As Davis notes, “whereas strong heroines are a growing trend in Disney animation of this later period, evil women are becoming a dying breed” (2003: 214). While these villainesses are still shown to have these jealous qualities, we are not made to hate them without qualification or a degree of sympathetic understanding.

In Kenneth Branagh’s most recent re-telling of *Cinderella*, the Wicked Stepmother (Cate Blanchett) is jealous of Ella’s goodness and of her late Mother. Lady Tremaine even wears green more than any other color, an outward expression of her inner jealousy. Early in the film, she overhears a conversation between Ella and her Father and is suddenly the shunned other woman, never truly able to match up to Cinderella’s treasured Mother and we feel sympathy for her situation. Lady Tremaine also shares the story of her life and the loss of her first husband, allowing us to further understand her position. In one poignant scene, Ella asks of the Lady Tremaine: “Why are

you so cruel? I don't understand it!" To which the Lady Tremaine replies, "[b]ecause you are young, and innocent, and good ... and I" However, she does not finish her response, appearing aggrieved that her character is somehow irreparable because of the trials and tribulations she has experienced in her life. It seems that while the central trait of jealousy remains integral to the Disney villain, the reasons for this jealousy have become more complex as the Disney fairy tale has transformed alongside American society. Men, circumstance and a loss of innocence also seem to have a role to play in the evolution of the cruel Disney villainess.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE UNDERDOG

The ordinary heroes within the Disney fairy tale are often as important as the princess herself. Grumpy, Doc, Sleepy, Sneezy, Dopey, Bashful and Happy are now all indelibly associated with the Snow White story. Part of the reasoning behind Disney's decision to characterize the dwarfs was largely the success of *The Three Little Pigs*. Each of the little pigs involved in the plot to take down the Big Bad Wolf had different characteristics, all of them relatable to ordinary citizens. The Depression created a new 'common' American man through the shared experience of poverty and unemployment. All men of society, of all backgrounds and temperaments, had to work together to bring about a new prosperity in America. This emphasis on collective action is at the heart of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and was the cornerstone of one of Roosevelt's biggest projects in the New Deal: The Works Progress Administration (WPA). Snow White's dwarfs exemplify the community spirit roused by Roosevelt's New Deal. Anyone could be successful in life, as long as they worked together. Walt Disney also tapped into the social culture of the 1930s by elevating the humble dwarfs to the position of heroes in the story.

The triumph of the underdog has always been central to American cultural identity. Carolyn Kitch has drawn attention to the centrality of this narrative to national myth. The success of the little hero seems to have an intrinsic link to the resilience of American spirit (2002). This is seen in many elements of popular culture, but is primarily in evidence in film and on television. Booker highlights the subscription of American blue collar popular culture to the basic formula of the glorification of the underdog "who triumphs against the odds because of his or her innate merit" (2012: 282).

There are many little heroes in the Disney fairy tale. In the animated version of *Cinderella*, the mice are ultimately responsible for freeing Cinderella from her tower so she can try on the glass slipper. Sebastian and Flounder in *The Little Mermaid* play a significant role in trying to help Ariel secure her kiss from Prince Eric and in the final battle against the Sea Witch, Ursula. Most recently, in *Frozen* and *Tangled*, the underdog even *becomes* the prince. The thief Flynn Ryder and the ice seller Kristoff both win the hearts of the princesses, showing that the underdog has a crucial role to play in the formation of the Disney 'happily ever after.'

At the beginning of each of these narratives, Kristoff and Flynn chase money and superficial possessions indicative of 1920s ideology. Miriam Meissner has underscored the transformations in narratives following the crash of 2008, emphasising the implicit critique of the city and its values in these films, and their advocacy of the importance of stability and community (2017). At the end of these adaptations of

traditional stories, it is revealed that each of these characters wants stability, financial security and a sense of belonging.

THE AMERICAN DREAM AND HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Lastly, it is pertinent to discuss the dream of a ‘happily ever after’ inherent in many Disney fairy tales. Steven Swann Jones has emphasized that in all fairy tales, “this happy ending is such a basic and important aspect of the genre, it may be regarded as a definitional feature” (1995: 17). Disney’s fairy tales weave the desire for change into their narrative. This desire for relief from the current setting was very much present in the society in which *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was made. As the American Dream has developed through time, however, the essence of the Disney dream has also changed. This is particularly evident with the changing position of the Disney princess.

Developing from post-feminist narratives in the 1990s, the ultimate goal in the Disney princess’ journey shifts from finding “any prince to the right prince” (Stover 2013: 4). Attention is drawn to the agency of the princess in creating her *own* destiny. While originally held captive by the Beast, Belle turns him “into a ‘new’ man, one who is sensitive, caring and loving” (Giroux and Pollock 2010: 100) and returns to the Castle to save his life. Jasmine rejects the suitors proposed by her Father and *chooses* Aladdin. Pocahontas and Mulan both favor their ‘career’ and their family calling over their desire for a husband (Davis 2003). In the case of *Frozen*, *Brave*, *Tangled*, and the latest Disney princess release, *Moana* (2016), the princess’ ‘happily ever after’ doesn’t contain a prince at all. Princess Merida, Elsa in *Frozen* and the chief’s daughter, Moana, have no romance in their personal narratives, and neither Rapunzel’s Flynn nor Anna’s Kristoff are born of royalty.

Disney princesses are breaking out of their previous typeset roles and the early Disney dream is now being mocked and referenced within the framework of the Disney films themselves. This began with the live action and animated feature film, *Enchanted* (2007), in which every single tenet of the traditional Disney fairy tale is overturned and updated. The Prince (James Marsden) is portrayed as useless and the Princess, Giselle, (Amy Adams) wants to date her prince before marrying him. Tasker argues that this is a paradoxical narrative for Disney as it “registers a discomfort with the reproduction of passive models of feminine acquiescence for audiences of girls and a need to reconcile that discomfort with the requisite happy ending in which the couple are united” (2011: 69). Similarly, Cristina Bacchilega has drawn attention to the way in which the parody of the traditional fairy tale in *Enchanted* expresses “a disavowal of belief in fairy tale fantasies” and in doing so opens “up the space for rehearsing those very fantasies” (2013, 118).

While one could argue that the ironic ‘performance’ of the fairy tale in *Enchanted* significantly reduces its feminist impact, this film should be recognized as part of a growing trend of independence for the Disney princess and a change in the nature of her ‘happily ever after.’ In the 2009 retelling of *The Princess and the Frog*, Princess Tiana rejects the notion of wishing upon a star and chooses instead to work hard and save to open up her restaurant. The princess figure is parodied through the character of Charlotte, whose obsession with her appearance and finding romance are pitted against Tiana’s sensibilities. The Disney princess and her fairy tale were given a new,

modernized framework. Set against the backdrop of the inauguration of President Obama, it is difficult to deny the contextual importance of this Disney fairy tale. As Lester has underlined, “the reality of the first African American president ... made the moment of Disney’s first African American princess even more boldly pronounced” (2010: 298).

The Disney ‘happily ever after’ continues to be treated with irony within the narrative of *Frozen*, as Anna’s song, “Love is an Open Door” with Prince Hans contains many visual references to previous Disney fairy tale films, including *Peter Pan*, *Aladdin*, and *Cinderella*. The change in narrative also becomes apparent in an exchange between Kristoff and Anna when Kristoff criticizes Anna for getting engaged to Prince Hans after just one day, exposing the modern reality of the Disney ‘happily ever after.’ The Disney fairy tale is self-consciously referenced and modernized in *Frozen* in other ways. For example, the traditional notion of romantic ‘true love’ in Disney fairy tales is changed, as Anna saves her sister’s life by sacrificing her own, challenging the sexist notion that true love’s kiss must save the day; instead, acts of trust, selfless love and family are proposed as alternatives (Wilde 2014: 147).

It also needs to be considered that as the fabric of American society is changing, so too is the Disney fairy tale and the Disney dream. This is particularly important for the representations of the gay community in Disney films. Sean Griffin has argued that following capitalist pressures, the company has been forced to “recognise a gay market for its products, and not a gay agenda” (2000: xviii). Carrie Cokeley has similarly contended that Disney animation promotes heterosexual imagery throughout its narratives (2005). However, in some more recent animated and live action productions there is evidence of a shifting attitude towards previously marginalized groups. This is particularly evident with Disney’s retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*. The character of Lefou (Josh Gad) was openly recognized as gay in press reviews of the film (Furness 2017 and Lodge 2017). Gad portrays Lefou as desiring his companion, Gaston (Luke Evans), and importantly, sees him find happiness in the closing moments of the film, dancing at Belle and the Beast’s wedding with another man.

CONCLUSION

Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was born out of Depression culture in the 1930s, where the transformative nature of Roosevelt’s New Deal had a substantial impact on American ideology. The former focus on individualism in the 1920s was replaced with a felt need for communitarian action and emphasis on the value of character over material wealth. These substantial cultural shifts were reflected in Disney’s first fairy-tale film and are shaped by distinctive developments in American history. However, Disney fairy tales are proving more relevant than ever to the changing socio-cultural landscape of the American Dream. The “Cinderella” story of the rise from ‘rags to riches,’ the importance of the goodness of one’s character, the jealousy of the villain, the triumph of the underdog and the hope for a happy ending still infuse Disney fairy tales today. Indeed, the underdog has become more important than ever, and in some cases has been elevated to the role of prince. In many recent Disney fairy tales, moreover, the princess is no longer required to have a husband by the end of the story. Finally, Disney fairy tales are also beginning to recognize the gay

community, reflecting substantial changes within American society, including legalization for gay marriage in the US in 2015.

As the socio-cultural conditions of American society have transformed, the essence of the American Dream has changed, and there has been a subsequent shift in Disney fairy-tale narratives. This development has become more visible in the last few years, as Disney remakes its animated fairy tale productions as live action features, prompting a direct comparison between the ‘old’ and the ‘new.’ As a result, Disney fairy tales have become more ‘real’ than ever before, exposing their inherent idealism to the harsh conditions of everyday life. To accommodate this elaborate shift in American cultural identity, Disney’s fairy tale characters are now more nuanced and emotionally complex, and their ‘happily ever afters’ have been modified and made more realistic. This underlines the centrality of the Disney fairy tale to the negotiation and mediatization of the American Dream.

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

AFRICAN-AMERICAN ADAPTATIONS OF FAIRY TALES



Neal A. Lester

The mirrors of society do not mirror society.

(Anna Deavere Smith, Introduction to *Fires in the Mirror* [Smith 1993: xxviii])

In her 1993 Nobel Lecture, author Toni Morrison identifies a rather simple truth, that stories unite and narratives document human experience across geographies, communities, and generations. More specifically, she identifies the following “Once upon a time” fairy-tale trope as one that transports young and old to distances far away and often beyond the walls of the everyday:

“Once upon a time there was an old woman. Blind but wise.” Or was it an old man? A guru, perhaps. Or a griot soothing restless children. I have heard this story, or one exactly like it, in the lore of several cultures.

“Once upon a time there was an old woman. Blind. Wise.”

In the version I know the woman is the daughter of slaves, black American, and lives alone in a small house outside of town.

(Morrison 1993: n.p.)

While acknowledging this narrative trope of “Once upon a time” across cultures, generations, and communities, Morrison revises this trope to add specificity nationally and historically. Hers is an American story often overlooked by white patriarchy, yet hers is also an American story of gaining wisdom from folly, of light emerging from the darkness, and of uncertainty and suspicion transforming into clarity, vulnerability into strength. Morrison’s point, as I read it, is to demonstrate a specificity within a perceived universal, especially a story about human risk-taking, language, human embattlement, race, gender, and American history that both indicts and challenges her Nobel Lecture audience then and her reading audience today.

Morrison’s rhetorical exercise above provides a strong foundation upon which to consider the need and desire for inclusion in local, national, and global narratives that legitimize, name, and otherwise validate the everyday lives of black Americans, past and present. Ralph Ellison’s Prologue to *Invisible Man* (1947) underscores this human need for visibility, truth, and self-validation: “I am invisible, understand,

simply because people refuse to see me” (Ellison 1947: 3). This effort and commitment to making visible that which has socially, politically, culturally, and historically been absent or marginalized explains this ongoing need for and the multiple strategies writers use to adapt, modify or otherwise compel black Americans, and some socially conscious others, to march with bold intentionality into the too-often WHITES ONLY world of fairy tales.

CONTEXT

When I first investigated this subject of African-American adaptations in my essay “African American Renderings of Traditional Texts” for the edited National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) collection *Global Perspectives on Teaching Literature: Shared Visions and Distinctive Visions* (1993), I was reminded by the now late black feminist scholar Nellie McKay that black people do not necessarily need to revise or adapt Western narratives because blacks have a wealth of their own national folklore:

few black writers have attempted to simply rewrite traditional Euro-texts from a black perspective ... Black writers have an enormous wealth of mythology of their own, both from their African and American experiences, and have also always had an agenda of their own to push in their writing. I don’t think re-writing other peoples’ texts has been high on their agenda.

(251)

While I did not and do not agree with this perspective, I am reminded now – and was then – that as long as Eurocentric theorists, scholars, narratives, and perspectives continue to exclude or marginalize the experiences, rhythms, languages, and nuances of people of color, there will long be a need to modify, repurpose, colorize, or otherwise adapt “white” narratives. Such exercises legitimize, document, educate, and celebrate others’ experiences and other political, cultural, ethnic, and historical ways of being in a “culturally diverse world.” Vivian Yenika-Agbaw, in her essay “Introduction: Multiculturalism and Children’s Literature” in *Fairy Tales with a Black Consciousness: Essays on Adaptations of Familiar Stories* (2013), proclaims this need for “different Black cultural retellings of traditional tales” informed by “multicultural ideologies”; recognizing and addressing the “anti-racist agenda that is at the core of most multicultural discourses” (2013: 2) in the classroom and in the world.

Unsurprisingly, work on fairy-tale revisions and adaptations has been done mostly in texts for children. When I look at the heteronormativity of fairy tales in my essay “(Un) Happily Ever After: Fairy Tale Morals, Moralities and Heterosexism in Children’s Texts” (2006), I note that many of the same-sex revisions are not intended for an audience of children; indeed, the contrary is the case in Michael Ford’s *Once Upon a Time: Erotic Fairy Tales for Women* (1996) and *Happily Ever After: Erotic Fairy Tales for Men* (1996), and Peter Cashoralli’s *Fairy Tales: Traditional Stories Retold for Gay Men* (1995). Although I have not revisited these collections in years, I have no recollection that any of these stories included characters of color; all characters were by default white. However well intentioned, these authors and these stories – and many since then – do not address race and culture, and when they do, even they maintain and sustain the patriarchal ideal of heteronormativity and of

binary gender roles in same-sex unions. Rarely do single adaptations – revisions, reimagining, and re-imaginings take into account intersectional perspectives that involve age, gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, religion, body type, and the like at once. Still, the very existence of these adaptations means that the fairy-tale world continues to open its doors to those who have often been excluded.

Even when others accept the challenge to revise a fairy tale, as does Michael Ford in the edited collections above, being aware of multiple and diverse perspectives can prove challenging. For example, Ford's own race and class privilege resounds in his penned introduction to the *Erotic Fairy Tales for Men* volume, in which he writes:

The greatest lesson-learners of all were fairy tales. Often read to us merely as precursors to bedtime by harried loved ones who simply wanted to put us to sleep so they could enjoy some quiet time, these simple stories were treasure chests of information that taught us, knowingly or not, about love, life, and what was expected of us.

(1996b: 1)

This white middle-class romantic ideal of being tucked in by a nuclear family member at the end of a day in a safe typically white rural neighborhood is challenged in Eve Merriam's satiric volume *The Inner City Mother Goose* (1996). Poet Nikki Giovanni, in her preface to the 1996 edition of this volume, offers a context for the necessity of visibility and acknowledgement in Merriam's "edgy" adaptation:

Eve Merriam took the spirit of Mother Goose to the inner city to give voice to those who were being silenced. She did not have the luxury of code. She had the moral indignation of a just cause ... Agony should not be ignored. Mother Goose emerged among peasants to let them know they were not incorrect in their perceptions; Merriam gave voice to the inner city to let them know there are some who hear.

(1996: 2)

Merriam acknowledges the intentionally political nature of children's texts broadly – rhymes, ditties, nursery rhymes, and fairy tales – accepting as her revisionist task in this instance the unveiling of the uglier side of America for many Americans, its urban life:

When I first wrote *The Inner City Mother Goose* in 1969, I took up a number of distressingly familiar topics that I felt we dare not close our eyes to: inadequate housing, unemployment, rats, cockroaches, crime and violence in the streets, noise pollution, graft—including police corruption, insufficient public transportation, cutbacks in funding for essential community services. In the intervening years such problems have not disappeared, they have only intensified. It seems to me it would not only be morally wrong, it would be politically tragic to gloss over these areas and refuse to recognize their reality, for if we do we will not be able to redeem our cities and thereby our civilization.

(1996: 7–8)

Not only are the narratives here conveying the unromanticized experiences of some of those living in such conditions, David Diaz's illustrations are of brown and black characters in different skin hues, body shapes and sizes, hairstyles, and cisgenders.

COLORIZATIONS AND RECASTINGS

Importantly, there is no single indicator of a "black text" as I explain in my essay "For All My Children, or Approaching African American Children's Picture Books," in Stewart and Atkinson's *Ethnic Literary Traditions in American Children's Literature* (2009):

What threads ["black texts"] together for me is that they are in fact authored by African Americans, they highlight the rich nuances and textures of orality and rhythmic storytelling, they challenge stereotypes, they present complex identity issues, they comment on social attitudes and perceptions about race, and they present messages of cultural and racial affirmation. On some level, each book reaffirms a positive message of difference that simultaneously affirms our basic humanity and our connections to others all over the world.

(Lester 2009: 102)

Hence, revisions and adaptations take many forms and formats and engage multiple strategies.

Joyce Carol Thomas, for example, challenges the heteronormative western world of "Cinderella" by creating a tale framed by the original but with a gospel trope. In *The Gospel Cinderella* (2004), a single mom loses her young daughter in a hurricane, and the child is found by a less-than-kind mother of two rather homely and talentless twin daughters. The mother who loses her child finds solace in singing gospel and seeks to mentor a younger singer of great talent. The story's climax comes when an *American Idol* or *Sunday Best* style audition for the best gospel singer occurs and the long-lost daughter emerges for an emotional reunion.

Thomas's reframed story connects two black American music forms – gospel and blues – and shows the power of music to heal, build, and sustain community. The story is rooted in black southern aesthetics of the tradition of the black American gospel legend, the late Reverend James Cleveland's Mass Choirs. Reverend Cleveland, himself a singer and director, went across the US, bringing a city's best singers – mostly black – together as a Mass Choir for a week of educational workshops and rehearsals with legends of gospel and culminating in a major public concert. Thomas's story shows the blurred lines historically between blues and gospel, acknowledging that these two musical genres are intricately connected through the experiences of those who turned to music and song to express themselves simultaneously at their most vulnerable and their most triumphant. This text alludes to WEB DuBois' "sorrow songs" in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and to author Zora Neale Hurston's famous line, though modified: "I been in sorrow's kitchen and drank out of all the cups" to "From a cup set before me, I sip sorrow each day. Every time I swallow I find sorrows come to stay. Then flavors of joy I taste in my cup. Easing my pain and lifting me up" (Thomas 2004: n.p.). Such lines embody the paradox of black American experiences, past and present, missing from Eurocentric fairy tales.

In Thomas's *The Gospel Cinderella*, black culture and identity are marked through David Diaz's illustrations of brown characters with different hair textures and styles but also through food – sweet potato pies, ten pots of collard greens, and pot liquor from the greens. Even the seemingly unimportant reference to Cinderella's "two no-singing daughters" Hennie and Minnie has a culturally specific rhythm and humor. Further, this revision does not culminate in the typical "happily ever after" heteronormative marriage but rather with a gospel duet between Cinderella and pianist Prince of Music, a relationship not about romance but rather about performance in the same way that this story is less focused on Cinderella's physical beauty than on Cinderella's singing talents.

Very few such adaptations beyond Douglas W. Larche's feminist *Father Gander Nursery Rhymes: The Equal Rhymes Amendment* (1985) revise the traditional rhymes in terms of gender, race, and ability. The illustrations here include brown characters with crutches and in wheelchairs as they provide the backdrop for such feminist rhymes as:

Jack be nimble, Jack be quick,
Jack jump over the candlestick!
Jill be nimble, jump it too,
If Jack can do it, so can you!
(1985: 8)

Larche explains his motive for creating this revisionist text:

We have come a long way in battling discrimination and sexism, but the battle is not yet won. All of us have a responsibility to see to it that our children grow up unbiased toward another's age, color, sex or religious preference. We have a responsibility to reinforce the message to our children that their talents and the development of them will decide their successes in life, not their skin color or sex ... For today's children it is time to take the delights of the old Mother Goose and apply them to the ideals we all want our children to have – equality, love, responsibility, and appreciation for life and all living things, good nutrition, and conservation of resources.

(1985: 5)

Larche maps these renditions across many lines, referencing even the environmental movement. Still, his well-meaning pronouncements about political evolutions do not take into account the systemic ways that individuals and communities are routinely privileged, others excluded and marginalized.

What Larche's text does highlight, however, is the reality of minimal representations of differently abled characters and even fewer differently abled characters of color in these renditions. Sarah Josepha Hale, however, casts an African-American, pig-tailed girl with glasses – Sarah Jackson, a first-grade student from Kennebunk, Maine – as Mary in her version of *Mary Had a Little Lamb* (Hale 1990). This photo-illustration book shows Mary with her white lamb, in school with her racially diverse schoolmates, and her white male teacher. About Mary's eyeglasses, the book's photo-illustrator Bruce McMillan explains: "Though many children wear glasses,

few photo-illustrated books feature children wearing them. Eyeglasses are reflections. I felt it important to see a child wearing glasses” (n.p.).

Fundamental then to these adaptation projects is inclusion and an opportunity to address exclusion. Such adaptations take many forms and address different dimensions of diversity and inclusion socially, politically, and historically.

NOT JUST THE ILLUSTRATIONS

More often than not, for some children, parents, and scholars, just “colorizing” the typically white characters accomplishes so much when historically representations of non-white characters have been absent (see Larrick 1965; Creager 1991; Pirofski 2001; Lester 2014; Scherker 2014). Such is the case in Elizabeth Murphy Oliver’s *Black Mother Goose Book* (1981) wherein all the characters are brown and exist in both urban and rural landscapes. There is no clear explanation of why some of the words from the familiar short rhymes appear in Swahili at the bottom of each page but adult and child readers will learn a few words of Swahili vocabulary while experiencing the rhymes.

Similarly, *Jaha and Jamil Went Down the Hill: An African Mother Goose* (1995) by Virginia Kroll educates readers about Africa and African culture – the language, the northern African landscape, its native vegetation and wildlife, its indigenous dress and hairstyles, native customs and rituals, and character names like “Jaham,” “Jamil,” “Atu,” “Siwatu,” and “Asha.” The author explains her intentions in the book:

The verses in this book are those that Mother Goose might have written, had she visited Africa. The rhymes, with which many children are familiar, contain different lyrics that teach about a few of the wonderful diverse aspects of African life, both modern and traditional.

(Kroll 1995: n.p.)

These objectives are apparent in this Afrocentric *Jack and the Beanstalk* refrain:

Fee, fi, fo, foo.
I smell the juice of vegetable stew.
With a scarf around my head,
I’ll grind the manioc to make our bread.
(n.p.)

She then offers a legend with the note that “the poems in *Jaha and Jamil Went Down the Hill* correspond to the following Mother Goose rhymes.”

An Afrocentric perspective is also apparent in Rachel Isadora’s “retelling” of *Hansel and Gretel* which includes images of Afrocentric brown children – Gretel with dreadlocks and Hansel wearing an African kufi cap (Figure 19.1). Isadora (2009) sets her “simple retelling of this classic Brothers Grimm fairy tale in a lush African forest” (book jacket): the children’s parents are costumed in full African attire, and straw-covered homes and vegetation punctuate the family’s dwelling landscape. The story maintains the familiar gendered narrative in which the males lead the girls, and come up with solutions to problems while the girls cry. Only when Gretel has to fend for



Figure 19.1 Illustration from *Hansel and Gretel* retold and illustrated by Rachel Isadora, © 2009 by Rachel Isadora. Used by permission of G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

herself is she forced to strategize to save her brother and trick the wicked witch who desires them as her own meal.

Comparable challenges to ethnocentrism have also been made in recent adaptations of the story of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.” As I submit in public conversations and in print, there’s nothing particular about Goldilocks’ hair in “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” that makes it a critical part of the narrative of her intrusion into the three Bears’ home. Still, she is more often than not imaged as a white female with long straight blonde hair, the all-American child we might see also in older versions of the early reading series *Dick and Jane*, published in the US from the 1930s to the 1970s, from which generations of Americans learn not only to read and write, but also about constructions of race, gender, sexuality, class, and family. Alile Sharon Larkin, however, changes that representation and adds a Caribbean flavor to the story through the lead character’s renaming as “Dreadlocks” rather than “Goldilocks” and through the character’s clothing, hairstyles, and food. In the 1991 Inter Image Video, the straight-haired familiar Goldilocks is replaced by Nimi, a “cinnamon brown child with lots of pretty African curls on her pretty little cinnamon brown head” (n.p.). Nimi’s nickname “Dreadlocks” is given to her by her Caribbean family and village because of her hair texture and style: “curly-curly-kinky-curly-nappy-curly hair,” the exact opposite of the straight and usually blonde Goldilocks of tradition and American popular culture. This revision also addresses beauty standards for little brown and black girls and women who are continually bombarded by the illusory female ideal of Barbie’s, Britney’s, or Beyoncé’s hair, insisting instead that Nimi’s “curly curly-kinky-curly-nappy curly twists and locks ... [are] so divine,” a sentiment echoing Carolivia Herron’s controversial children’s book, *Nappy Hair* (1997), that celebrates the dark chocolate brown skin color of elementary school aged Brenda who “has the kinkiest

most screwed up tangled up” hair in the world. In Larkin’s version, Nimi cooks cheese grits for the bear family, another cultural detail connected to Dreadlock’s identity.

In his series of picture books, middle and junior high school educator Fred H. Crump, Jr. recalls seeing that his black students were missing from some of the very texts and narratives they were reading:

My specific reason for undertaking this [revisionist] project was an attempt to bring the “mainstream” fairy tales into more black kids’ lives in a format they could relate to *and* enjoy. I first got the idea at a Book Fair at school in 1981 when I overheard two of my black students say there were no books for them. There was an Ezra Jack Keats and maybe Michael Jackson ... As I worked, I took Xerox copies to show my black students, and received very positive responses, lots of smiles, many good suggestions. I began to see it as a possible “self-esteem” boost for them. I feel we underestimate the impact of “lack of self-esteem.”

(letter to author, 5 December 1990)

Crump’s response is a retelling, reimagining, renaming, and reimagining of those traditional tales; addressing skin tones and hairstyles and textures of the brown characters – as he does in his versions of *Thumbelina* (1988), *Little Red Riding Hood* (1989), *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* (1990), *Cinderella* (1990), *Rapunzel* (1991), *Sleeping Beauty* (1992), *Rumpelstiltskin* (1992), and *Beauty and the Beast* (1992) which include black characters and even brown animals and a brown Humpty Dumpty and brown Mother Goose. He renames familiar characters with what he intends to be more Afrocentric names and signifiers – *Jack and the Beanstalk* becomes *Jamako and the Beanstalk* (1990), *Hansel and Gretel* becomes *Hakim and Grenita* (1991), *Little Black Sambo* is *Mgambo and the Tigers* (1992), *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* is *Afrotina and the Three Bears* (1991), and *The Ugly Duckling* becomes *The Ebony Duckling* (1992).

Actor Robert Guillaume says that he accepted the challenge of creating The Home Box Office animated series *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales for Every Child* (1995) with this realization:

For a long time, I had the feeling that not enough was done for young black kids. When I first saw this idea, it seemed like the fruition of a dream, so I immediately got involved. If you never see images like yourself in common stories, it strikes on a very deep level that you are not included in this American life. We have to be concerned about what that means.

(“Happily Ever After” 1995: 37)

Guillaume assembled an award-winning and star-studded cast of multicultural artists and actors to overhaul – at least aesthetically – the monochromatic world of fairy tales in which Mother Goose, Cinderella, and Snow White are always white. Their collective efforts constitute one of the strongest bodies of multicultural animations in which the ethnicity of music, language, clothing, landscapes, and food is addressed and adapted. This series incorporates Asian versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* (Chinese), *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (Japanese), *The Little Mermaid* (Korean), and *The Princess and the Pea* (Korean); Hispanic versions of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Hansel*

and *Gretel*, and *Cinderella*; a Jamaican *Rumpelstiltskin*; Native American versions of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*; and African–American versions of *The Frog Prince*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Valiant Young Tailor*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. To avoid stereotyping to represent a group’s culture and identity, series producer Donna Brown Guillaume says that the production team very deliberately sought writers who were part of the cultures being represented; whether Asian, Cuban–American, Puerto Rican, Chinese–American or African–American. She explains that for her and spouse Robert Guillaume, this project was both personally and politically necessary as parents of a black girl often invisible in the world of children’s books and stories: “We wanted our daughter, Rachel, to be able to identify with fairy tale characters the way white children did, and wondered if other black parents felt the same” (Miller 1995: E1, E6). As for her participation in the multicultural fairytale remixing, Latina actor Liz Torres, the Fairy in *Cinderella* and the Stepmother in *Hansel and Gretel*, echoes the Guillaume’s sentiments:

Little girls – black, Puerto Rican, Asian – all think they’re Snow White or Goldilocks. I identified with these characters; then one day I grew up and realized Snow White had nothing to do with me. We have to claim these characters for ourselves. Kids are going to gain self-esteem seeing their own ethnicity respected [and represented].

(“Happily Ever After” 1995: 37)

Particularly noteworthy in this series is the episode *Mother Goose: A Rappin’ and Rhymin’ Fairy Tale* (1997), featuring an ensemble of multiethnic Hollywood stars and Whoopi Goldberg as Mother Gooseberg. Mother Gooseberg raps and rhymes but doesn’t feel appreciated by fairyland. The usual characters show up in the music-driven episode and witness beat boxing, rap, blues, and hip hop. The story ends happily ever after, making aesthetic connections between rap, spoken word, and Mother Goose rhymes seamlessly and inclusive of multiple ethnic backgrounds.

Such multicultural revisionist work in the form of a series rather than stand-alone episodes is important. To give another example, the “Jump at the Sun Fairy-Tale Classics” book series (New York: Jump at the Sun/Hyperion Books for Children) offers these renderings: *Jack and the Beanstalk* (2004), *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (2004), *Beauty and the Beast* (2006), and *Rapunzel* (2007). Here, the characters are African–American as reflected in their skin hues and hairstyles. While the tales have been revised in terms of the character circumstances and story settings, the overall framework of the narratives remains close to existing versions of the story. For instance, Beauty and her father live above their bookstore, Beauty loves to read, is “very kind” (Kurtz 2006: n.p.) and is able to save her imprisoned father by her charm and love of books, as is the case in the 1991 Disney film version of the story. The revised tale also maintains its heteronormative marriage ideal. Importantly, Goldilocks, in this series, has cornrows with beads as a cultural marker: “Once upon a time ... a little girl was called Goldilocks because of the beautiful golden beads she wore in her braided hair” (Kurtz 2004: n.p.). She is the daughter of a single mother and is quite the “rascal” who runs away into the forest to avoid doing her chores. The story posits that Goldilocks’s charm will not save her from the consequences of her mischievous

acts, especially among a household of bears. Jack, in this series, has dreadlocks, Rapunzel's hair is in Afrocentric box braids, the evil witch has "cut off Rapunzel's beautiful braids," and the prince has braids. In spite of the heteronormativity of this latter narrative, the book's final image of the union of two adult brown characters both with braided hair remains powerful and transformative: "The prince ... and Rapunzel and the two boys lived happily ever after." What is not paid attention to in the illustrations is the fact that the characters, like those in Fred Crump's series, all have the same brown skin tone; clearly perpetuating or subscribing to the belief that all blacks have the same skin hue.

Robert Guillaume is also the narrator for the revised tales *The Confetti Company Presents ...*, a series in which young multiethnic children read and act out these classic tales. The book jackets describe the project:

The Confetti Company is a fictional children's drama club whose members play different roles in each story, bringing the characters to life. The specially written, non-violent fairy tales feature happy family settings and show that children can make a difference.

(See for instance Fox 1993)

The 1993 read-along with audible dings for page turns for young readers and adapted by Naomi Fox, includes versions of *Hansel and Gretel*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Shoemaker and the Elves*, *A Different Kind of Christmas*, *The Frog Prince*, *Cinderella*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*. Not only does the multiethnic children's ensemble read the various tales in their own child voices, but some character names serve as cultural signifiers within the stories across the series: Kwame, Neema, Makisa, Pauli, Shalesa, Julio, Aimee, and Cami. Since this series has accompanying audio, the Confetti Company theme song with music and lyrics by Neal Fox has this refrain to highlight its multiethnic and multicultural focus:

We come in every color
That you can see
We're all part of
The Confetti Company.
We got the power
To be or not to be
Imagination can set you free
Nobody goes home
'Til we see a great big smile
Confetti Company
We got style.

(Fox 1993)

Again, the children are reading the stories and acting them out via animated voices as though they are on a playground or in a classroom with no complicated props, settings, or costumes.

POLITICS AND “LITERARY” ADAPTATIONS

Beyond revisionist stories for children, “literary” revisions constitute another significant exercise in adaptation for new audiences. Such exercises challenge Western representations by inverting narratives, recasting roles relative to gender, race and ethnicity, and sexual identity; all with the objective of disrupting the status quo. These revisions cross genres and formats, complicate identity representations, and critique institutions and systems that limit social imagination and political expectation.

Zora Neale Hurston, for instance, disrupts the traditional Western fairy-tale construct in her short story “Black Death” (1921 [1995]), in which she reverses gender conventions, revises racial stereotyping, and adds a distinctly African aesthetic to the plot of Rapunzel. Here, a mother, Mrs. Boger, steps in to rescue her daughter Docia when she is threatened with public shaming by a former suitor. Mrs. Boger approaches a Voodoo man for instructions on how to take revenge on the daughter’s ex-partner, but ultimately it is her own act of shooting a reflection in a mirror to kill the daughter’s lover that saves Docia. This fairy tale makes black characters central, whilst also engaging the world of the supernatural through Voodoo practices and beliefs. It further revises race stereotypes concerning whites and blacks by positioning blacks as the authors of their own fates; fates and circumstances whites cannot possibly know or understand: “The Negroes in Eatonville know a number of things that the hustling bustling white man never dreams of. He is a materialist with little ears for overtones” (Hurston 1995: 15). The story further disrupts Western perceptions of truth by ending with the mother’s saving the daughter from harsh treatment by a male suitor and putting her on the path toward happily ever after. If the daughter is happy, this mother is happy: “Mrs. Boger and Docia moved to Jacksonville where she married well” (1995: 17); thus, heteronormativity prevails but with a characteristic Hurstonian feminist edge.

Unlike the usually white, blonde-haired, and heterosexual Rapunzel, rescued from her tower by her dashing white and heterosexual prince, Essex Hemphill’s male casting in “Song for Rapunzel” results in a story in which a young man in a tower waits for his dashing prince to come to him and sweep him off into fairy-tale bliss. Hemphill’s character is not trapped in a physical tower but rather in a perpetual state of loneliness and futile anticipation, which he expresses, via a blues trope, in the following verses:

He stands
like Rapunzel,
waiting on his balcony
to be rescued
from the fire-breathing
dragons of loneliness.
...
He stands like Rapunzel,
growing deaf,
waiting
for a call.
(Hemphill 1992: 78)

Race and ethnicity are not expressly detailed here since the isolation and loneliness are based on sexual identity; rather, the poem underscores the idea that princes rescuing princes are few and far between. In the same way, Georgy Porgy is forever kissing girls when he might well prefer kissing boys or kissing boys and girls.

Like Essex Hemphill, Randall Kenan, in his short story “Run, Mourner, Run” (1992), uses the tropes of fairy tales and of Mother Goose nursery rhymes to challenge the heteronormativity that prevails in early childhood teachings and lessons. Here, Dean is a gay white male driven to betray his own moral integrity by his economic desperation and importantly by his loneliness and longing for a sustained romantic and social intimacy. Dean’s challenges come with accepting his homosexuality in a world of childhood rhymes, songs, and ditties that tell him that no matter what he achieves professionally, in the eyes of those who see homosexuality as morally wrong, he will never be like “Little Jack Horner” who sits in a corner, eating a Christmas pie. Even when Dean metaphorically sticks in his thumb and pulls out a plum, his homosexuality will never allow him to be a “good boy” according to his childhood teachings.

Kenan furthers rewrites the mythology of the ideal middle class, white, able-bodied family projected in such texts as the *Dick and Jane* primers that have shaped the expectations and attitudes of young Americans for several generations. According to Kenan, such texts ensure that lessons in morality, sexual identity and social class are learned early in childhood and can leave individuals emotionally spinning and going nowhere socially, emotionally, and spiritually:

Once upon a time ... Dean had real dreams. In first grade he wanted to be doctor; in second, a lawyer; in third, an Indian chief. He read fairy stories and nursery rhymes, those slick shiny oversized books, over and over, and Mother Goose became a Bible of sorts. If pigs could fly and foxes could talk and dragons were for real, then surely he could be anything he wanted to be.

(Kenan 1992: 164)

In a world where economics separates the haves from the have-nots, neither Dean – deemed by Percy as “nothing more than poor white trash: a sweet faced, dark-haired faggot with a broken-down Ford Torino, living with his chain-smoking mama in a damn-near condemned house they didn’t even own” (Kenan 1992:166) – nor the “mesmerizing” Raymond, the rich black man Dean betrays and falls for, can be openly gay men who live happily ever after in a world that accepts and appreciates all of who they are. While Dean may be more open than the closeted Raymond, he is still not respected and is even bullied because of his sexual identity and economic and social status. For a moment though, Dean feels rescued by the married Raymond who “kissed Dean’s hand as though it were a small and frightened bird” (Kenan 1992:175). The rescue is short-lived, however, since the reality of their secret getaway becomes mere fodder for small-town scandal.

Toni Cade Bambara’s short story “The Golden Bandit” is less an adaptation than a reimagining of the social constructions of texts more broadly believed to be politically and socially-neutral “authorized versions.” In this version, Bambara peels back the layers of the story and of the character Goldilocks – “the little yellow-haired gal” who is “a childhood hero” for some (Bambara 1995: 210) – to unleash the moral

outrage at the character's trespassing actions and behaviors that the typical fairy-tale world excuses or does not question. In the fairy-tale world, Goldilocks is curious and happens to wander into a home that is not hers and then damages owner's property, eats their food, and sleeps in their bed – all without personal accountability or moral responsibility. In Bambara's call-and-response version, Goldilocks is called out for her white middle-class privilege, as by extension, are all readers who don't question her unorthodox actions: she is a "Burglar. Felon. Uninvited" (207), "Vandal" (208), "shameless hussy" (208), "the heathen" (208), "warped little offspring ... retrograde little heifer" (209). The story, while infused with multicultural flavor in tone and format, concludes with this challenge to all with the power to author and thereby authorize texts:

Well, then do you think it is hip, healthy, or wise to inflict little children with the official version of the golden bandit before we have assumed the necessary task of encouraging and equipping the young in a critical habit? ... A critical habit is crucial, wouldn't you say, afflicted as we are every day with, err, rah ... Authorized versions. Lies. Cover-ups. Disinformation.

(210)

Bambara registers and recommends a note of suspicion about authoring and authority that must accompany any and every text if we are to arrive at more equal and inclusive conceptions of society; revisions and adaptations are necessary if it is to be possible to acknowledge and document other worlds, other values, and other truths, and so unite through effective storytelling.

CONCLUSION

Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her now seminal commentary about narrative, power, and how these inform and impact the human condition, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009), warns:

show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become. It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of "nkali": How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

(Adichie 2009: n.p.)

The very questioning of any text as the “official text” cuts at the heart of adaptation exercises. When there are no characters of color in the twelve stories included in *The Grosset Treasury of Fairy Tales* (1967 [1971]), historically and politically, alternative versions of “traditional narratives” that constitute for many a given “canon” must be created to address and correct such misrepresentations, to decenter single representations, and to demonstrate evolutions in thinking and public policy and in political and social realities. Indeed, as Bambara asserts at the closing of “The Golden Bandit,” “an official text is often a con text” (210). Such is the case when examining *The Real Mother Goose* (Wright 1914), with its elderly white Mother Goose character and a white blonde toddler on the cover and all-white, presumably “universal” middle-class and heterosexual characters throughout the text; a text rife with overt and subtle lessons about class, gender, sexual identity, and ability. These fictions are often presented as if they are normative and universal. On the back cover, for instance, this “real” Mother Goose is described in the following terms:

Men and women who loved this book in childhood are now sharing it with their children and grandchildren; teachers and librarians everywhere acclaim it was the “standard” Mother Goose. All the familiar voices are here, exactly as they have been repeated from generation to generation.

Mother Goose rhymes are a vital part of childhood. This wonderful book with Blanche Fisher Wright’s lively, colorful pictures – more than one hundred sixty of them – makes an enchanting introduction for little children.

(Wright 1914)

It is, however, such claims to the status of “single story” that Adichie and Bambara set out to challenge and revise.

Too often, traditional fairy tales and other narratives teach not-so-subtle lessons about inclusion and exclusion, about morality, about communal values, and about human value and personal worth. Strategies for addressing exclusion and misrepresentation are as varied as the authors who undertake this work. To give two further examples, the Broadway production *The Wiz* (1978), which reflected black urban culture with rhythm and blues music and an all-black cast, was created as a response to the fact that the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* excludes black characters and renders a different cultural reality and aesthetic. Similarly, “Mary Had a Little Blues” (2009), a children’s choral “adaptation of nursery rhymes in blues style” by Charles A. Collins, uses other blues forms – jazz and swing – to tell the story of Mary and her lamb:

Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was black as soot,
And everywhere that Mary went its sooty foot it put.
Oh – Baa baa Mary –
Sing baa baa to you blues.
Leave that sheep at home, girl, and get yourself to school.
(Collins 2009)

To feel a sense of belonging, individually and communally, authors turn to these exercises to validate and legitimize Others’ experiences. Whether they take place in children’s texts or literary (i.e. adult) revisions, adaptations of traditional stories

remain necessary and critically important because the misrepresentation and marginalization of black characters is still prevalent, and black rhythms and black cultures continue to be pushed outside mainstream creative expressions.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

SEXES, SEXUALITIES, AND GENDER IN CINEMATIC NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICAN FAIRY TALES Transforming Cinderellas



Pauline Greenhill

Across nations, cultures, and linguistic groups, fairy tales in all their media-crossing adapted versions address sex, gender, and sexuality. Their heteronormative reputation leads to the presumption that oral, literary, and other mediated fairy tales deal exclusively with heterosexual relationships. But like other versions of these stories, fairy-tale films – sometimes with subtlety, sometimes quite explicitly – can undermine conventional mainstream concepts of identities and relationships. Representations vary across the fairy-tale world. Though most American (US) and other fairy-tale films, especially mainstream studio productions, remain unrelentingly White in their characterization and perspective, a few sterling exceptions merit attention, and alternatives also manifest elsewhere in North and South America. Using close audiovisual analysis, I apply queer, critical race, and intersectional theory to explore how relationships between sex, gender, sexuality, and race manifest in four films featuring ethnic/racialized Cinderellas.

Queer theory deconstructs presumptions of normal and deviant sexualities – understood as social constructions not neutral descriptions – and their manifestations in practices and texts including folktales and fairy tales. Fairy-tale films can be queer in multiple senses: in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century usages to mean odd, strange making, eccentric, different, yet attractive; in implicating lives and theories relating to sexes and sexualities beyond the mainstream and deviating from norms; but also in the verb sense of spoiling or ruining. Anyone giving public talks about fairy tales and fairy-tale films as queer texts often finds themselves defending the very idea of sully these allegedly innocent stories by suggesting they might not be exclusively and resolutely heterosexual (see e.g. Doty 2000: 4). And yet normative heterosexuality is not the only possibility these narratives work with. In addition to their often quite overt queerness, many fairy tales' deep structure, represented by the realm of enchantment, is anti-normative in terms of sex, gender, and sexuality (see Turner and Greenhill 2012; Seifert 2015a and 2015b; Greenhill and Turner 2016; Greenhill 2018) – as are the films I discuss here.

Intersectional/critical race theory focuses on inequalities and subordination. Critical race theory recognizes the need to eschew color blindness in favor of acknowledging how White supremacy and racial othering infiltrate discourses and cultures. For example, as Sara Hines (2010) demonstrates, the illustrations for Andrew Lang's *Yellow*

Fairy Book, rather than offering disinterested interpretations, encode racialisation in rendering the beautification of the “black” main character in “The Glass Axe” (ATU 480) as a transformation to becoming White, though nothing in the fairy tale’s text suggests racial alteration. Intersectionality offers the insight that the interactions of oppression are complex rather than a simple sum of race, gender (see Crenshaw 1991), class, sex, ability, ethnicity, relation to colonialism, and much more. Other than Cristina Bacchilega’s examination of cinema and television (2013), applications of critical race and intersectionality theory to fairy-tale media have been rare, beyond critiques of the relentless Whiteness and Whitewashing of Disney princesses.

Here I look at four films from North and South America featuring Cinderellas of color: Venezuelan-born filmmaker Fina Torres’s *Mécaniques célestes* (*Celestial Clockwork*, 1995); Jamaican drama *Dancehall Queen* (directed by Letts and Elgood, 1997); New York Chinatown romance *Year of the Fish* (directed by Kaplan, 2007) (both discussed by Bacchilega 2013); and Colombian/Ecuadorian/US drama *Maria Full of Grace* (directed by Marston, 2004) (discussed by Hubner 2016) (see Zipes, Greenhill, and Magnus-Johnston 2014). Two more familiar films eliminated for reasons of space, *Another Cinderella Story* (directed by Santostefano, 2008) with Latina teen pop singer Selena Gomez and *Maid in Manhattan* (directed by Wang, 2002) starring adult Latina actor and pop singer Jennifer Lopez, also feature Cinderellas of color. As with a number of recent North American “Cinderella” (ATU 510A) romantic comedies, marriage is not the happy ending these Cinderellas seek (see Short 2015). Expressions of their sexuality, whether heterosexual or lesbian, are subordinated to other interests, especially in finding appropriate work and/or escaping inappropriate work.

The French/Belgian/Spanish/Venezuelan romantic comedy *Celestial Clockwork* concludes with a church wedding, but this is a marriage of convenience between a gay Frenchman and a lesbian immigrant, not the traditional fairy-tale happily-ever-after outcome. Indeed, weddings (complete with women singing Franz Schubert’s “Ave Maria”) bookend this film, which begins with the heroine, an aspiring mezzo soprano, fleeing her Venezuelan marriage ceremony to fly to Paris, still in her wedding dress. *Clockwork* further subverts the conventional “Cinderella” by offering a lesbian love story, with a doubled handsome princess and fairy godmother Parisian psychoanalyst.

The plot also includes a male prince/seeker, the producer filming Giacomo Rossini’s opera *La Cenerentola* who hunts for the perfect lead. For her physical transformation for the “ball,” Cinderella heroine Ana (played by Ariadna Gil) eschews the traditional gown and shows up in a white pantsuit. Again, against expectation, she doesn’t meet producer Italo Medici (played by Lluís Homar) there, prevented by room-mate and wicked stepsister/mother Celeste (played by Arielle Dombasle). Indeed, Celeste lies to the dark-eyed, dark-haired Ana, saying that Italo is looking for a blue-eyed blonde to play Cenerentola, saying, “Think about it. Grimm, Walt Disney ... Nordic stuff. The dominant iconography” (*Celestial Clockwork*, 1995).

Ana has a plethora of fairy godparents, male and female: her voice coach Grigorief (played by Michel Debrane) who helps Ana prepare her audition and tape despite his disdain for Rossini; Italo, seeking the ideal Cenerentola for his film. She also has her romantic partner Alcanie (played by Evelyne Didi), who provides Ana with the home she needs, and finally admits her love when she shows up at Ana’s religious

marriage to her gay friend Armand (played by Frédéric Longbois), so Ana can avoid being deported and Armand can satisfy his family's wish for a church wedding. Also godparent-like are Toutou the Afro-Caribbean witch doctor (played by Hildegard García Madriz) who prepares a potion for Ana's and Alcanie's romance; and the young Latina women who welcome Ana into their apartment in Paris, her roommate/helper/not-wicked stepsisters Lucila (played by Alma Rosa Castellanos), Tina (played by Chantal Aimée), and Gaby (played by Dominique Abel). Evil stepsister/mother Celeste, White, blonde, and heterosexual, contrasts with these many gay and ethnoracially marked helpers. And yet she's clearly a mover of the plot – her machinations are the literal Celeste-ial clockwork that set events in motion. The reference is perhaps ironic because Celeste's plans don't work like clockwork; always Ana's helpers/fairy godparents extricate or assist their Cinderella.

In further mediations on *Clockwork's* “meta-filmic, intertextual swerve,” Ana sends Italo a cassette tape of her singing; he decides she is his Cenerentola based only on her disembodied, mediated voice (Soliño 2001: 68). Also, metafilmic and intertextual, as in live-action Disney films, animations sometimes intervene in the ongoing action to advance magic and fantasy in the plot. For example, Celeste is frequently represented with animations that underline her wicked role but also show her work as a video artist. Her first appearance marks her as devil-like; she gives off a puff of smoke which remains in her wake. Her imagination-fueled animations show her, for example, “[taking] New York by storm” as she twirls in a sparkling gown and feather boa, with an animated lighted cityscape and fireworks behind her, and in a music-video like performance with brightly colored pop art and Andy Warhol-like stylised representations of her face. Her eyes flash orange and flame as she apparently casts a spell on Ana to make her leave their shared apartment.

Armand's animated visions are less literally technicolor, as are Italo's (he imagines Ana singing with a background of notes on musical staff). Her black-and-white poster of Maria Callas registers some of Ana's emotions, such as shock when the police are looking for her. Callas even sings a few notes when Toutou persuades Ana to marry Armand so she can stay in France. Alcanie's animations are brought on by her interactions with Toutou; when she confesses her passion for Ana, she imagines herself as a torch singer backed up by Vegas-style chorus girls. After Ana drinks the potion Toutou has prepared, moreover, animation represents the beginning of Ana's and Alcanie's sexual relationship. The second-last animation is a non-magical one, the commercial for Toutou, Armand, and their friend Claude's (played by Olivier Granier) company selling magical services. The final animation has Ana singing joyously, registering her delight that Alcanie has shown up for her church wedding with Italo, who finds her thanks to Toutou.

Music sometimes shades between diegetic and non-diegetic, and often parallels the film's narrative. The *Cenerentola* fairy-tale aria “*Una volta c'era un re*” (Once upon a time there was a king) that Ana tapes for Italo also tells *Clockwork's* story. Composers include not only Rossini and Schubert, but also Robert Schumann and Vincenzo Bellini (Ana sings along with Callas to her signature “*Casta Diva*” [Chaste Goddess] from *Norma*). French and Latin American popular music also enhances the *mise en scène*. “*Mecanicas Celestes*,” written and sung by Alma Rosa Castellanos, performed at the ball, narrates Ana's story of migrant experience:

My life runs like celestial clockwork/Yes, my life runs like celestial clockwork/
Let me tell you the story/of what happened to me/I left the land I love to come
sing here/I quickly discovered hypocrisy and envy/but I also met/people who
helped me/They became brothers/They nurture and encourage me/When things
get tough/they're always by my side.

Of course, not all migrants encounter the success and support the lyrics imply – and that enable Ana's (magical) happy ending. Wonder appears in astrology, predictions, visions, spells, and potions but also in the way the immigrants' lives turn out to their satisfaction. Though director Torres explores the "plight of the Latin American artist in the European world of high culture," clearly, many actual émigrés never find such a happy ending (Soliño 2001: 69). In locating the film with the immigrant underclass in Paris, *Clockwork* on one level updates the "Cinderella" story, and on another offers an implicit critique of the way that notions of nationality create a class system as strict as that represented in traditional folktales.

The film's genre, comedy, allows for play with a serious subject, not only rendering the authorities as unimaginative and easily duped, but also declining to accept the system or even take it seriously – just as the movie refuses to accede to heteronormativity. In particular, Ana's decision to marry Armand is not presented as an easy one that she simply accepts pragmatically. She asserts that she does not want to get married – not even to a friend who would make no inappropriate or unwanted demands of her – just for the sake of a visa. By implication, marriage to Alcanie (even if it were possible at the time) would not offer the solution; Ana simply does not want that kind of relationship. *Clockwork* successfully undermines the construction of Cinderella as heterosexual and White/blonde. Indeed, the heterosexual, White/blonde Celeste is the sole evil character – she is at times a literal caricature, as well as a comic figure.

Though the relationship of Ana and Alcanie moves the plot, *Clockwork*'s main motor is Ana's quest to become Italo's Cenerentola – the job, not the sexual partner, is the film's focus. Like her, Marcia (played by Audrey Reid) in *Dancehall*, Ye Xian (played by Vietnamese American An Nguyen) in *Fish*, and Maria (played by Catalina Sandino Moreno) in *Maria* deal with poverty, oppression, and sexual abuse and/or the threat of it. These underclass Cinderellas must rely primarily on themselves and their own capacities. Of the four, only Ye Xian ends up with a boyfriend – both Maria and Marcia seek to escape various men and male suitors, and lesbian Ana is uninterested in men.

Rotoscoped from live-action footage mechanically transformed into animation, *Year of the Fish* offers the story of the motherless 17-year-old Ye Xian, who comes to New York from China as an illegal immigrant to make money to send home to her sick father. She works for her cousin, Mrs Su (played by Tsai Chin), who runs a massage parlour offering sexual services; Ye Xian refuses to participate in sex work and so instead must cook and clean. She meets and falls in love with her prince, Johnny (played by Ken Leung). The mysterious Auntie Yaga (played cross dressed by Randall Duk King) gives Ye Xian the magical fish who narrates the story (voiced by David Lee). With Auntie Yaga's help, the girl finally achieves her happy ending of escaping Mrs Su's, living with Johnny and his grandmother and contentedly working in food service.

Director Kaplan's visual techniques emphasize characters and events. For example, he places a circle around the heads of individuals who will be crucial to the plot and then fades the rest of the background to black. Johnny's face is circled the first time he and Ye Xian see one another. The technique also shows Auntie Yaga's *absence* after she has given the fish "for good luck" to Ye Xian, demonstrating the old woman's magical ability to appear and disappear. Kaplan marks the fish's role as observer/chorus when he repeatedly cuts to close-ups of its head to emphasize significant plot developments. The visuals are often literally painterly, such as when Kaplan uses brush strokes in his wipes and cuts.

The fish's magic as avatar of Auntie Yaga is marked when the creature grows preternaturally fast. When the evil stepmother/sisters (Mrs Su and two of her employees) cook the fish, Ye Xian lovingly gathers the bones. Her transformation scene is precipitated when Mrs Su's brother Vinnie (played by Lee Wong) indicates he wants to marry her; Ye Xian refuses and Mrs Su threatens to send her to a brothel. The girl escapes out her window to look for Auntie Yaga. An old man tells her to find a white door, which she enters to encounter three terrifying figures, then a realistic sweatshop, then Auntie Yaga alone in a big room, seated at a table eating. Ye Xian brings her the fish bones, and Auntie Yaga notes that the girl has treated the fish well and that she should go to a New Year's party, but she needs a new dress. The complex sequence that follows demonstrates Auntie Yaga's ambivalent power, and the danger that Ye Xian faces in asking her for help.

Ye Xian's transformation sequence begins with a paint brush transition to a view from behind of the girl sitting naked in a tub, her torso and arms visible, as two women, one on either side, wash her. Light music with harp and piano and sounds of water are soothing. A series of close-ups follows, showing Ye Xian's face, and the women as their hands with washcloths clean her hair, arms, and back. All three faces register calm and contemplation as the women dry Ye Xian's back, and work on her fingernails and hair, smiling, till a third woman moves in from screen right, carrying a blue dress.

As the women dry a standing Ye Xian, the peaceful music ceases with an abrupt cut to Auntie Yaga. In a three-quarter rear shot, she looks out a window and rests her raised hand on the frame. Off camera Ye Xian says "Auntie Yaga" and Auntie Yaga turns. She is now in profile. Cut to a close-up of Ye Xian's face; she says, "There's something I like to ask about." Reverse to Auntie Yaga, as she turns slightly toward the girl: "Ask away but be careful." Cut to a close-up of Auntie Yaga, warning: "Not every question has a good answer." Back to Ye Xian and shots of the women, primping her.

Cut to a series of point-of-view shots reprising Ye Xian's climb up the stairs to Auntie Yaga's place, starting with a figure in shadow at the first landing, in a wide shot, as the camera moves up toward it. Ye Xian says, "When I come in downstairs, I see man with white face." Another paint brush transition to a close-up of Auntie Yaga; she changes the placement of her hands as Ye Xian asks, "Who is he?" Auntie Yaga turns more toward Ye Xian: "That was the bright day." Cut to Ye Xian who pauses. The close-up fades into her point-of-view shot as she climbs further. "Then I see man with red face." The camera moves closer to the figure; Auntie Yaga explains in voiceover "He is my red sun." A quick cut to Auntie Yaga and reverse to Ye Xian. Cut back to the stairs as the camera moves up toward another figure, with a paint

brush transition to a close-up of his face. Ye Xian says in voiceover: “Then I see man with no face at all, only dark.” Auntie Yaga replies in voiceover: “He is my dark knight.” Medium shot of Auntie Yaga in front of the window: “Those three are my faithful servants.” Cut to a close-up on Auntie Yaga, her tone rising and somewhat threatening: “Anything else you want to ask?” Close-up on Ye Xian, “No.” She looks down modestly, “Auntie Yaga, that’s enough.” Cut to Auntie Yaga’s face. “You are wise, you ask only of those things you saw outside my factory,” reverse to Ye Xian’s face, “not inside.” The girl’s face registers apprehension as she listens: “I don’t like to have my dirty laundry aired in public.”

Auntie Yaga moves from the window toward Ye Xian. Auntie Yaga says, “Well” – cut to Ye Xian’s face just before she turns to look in a mirror – “You stand there like you were mute.” Cut to Ye Xian’s face revealed in the mirror as the steam is wiped away with a cloth. Auntie Yaga inquires, “Tell me what you see.” Hands continue to move around Ye Xian, as she begins to smile for the first time. Cut to a wider shot from behind Ye Xian and her reflection in the mirror from the neck down. The women’s hands adjust her dress. “It’s so beautiful Auntie Yaga,” Ye Xian says. She turns from side to side to view the outfit better. “They make blue dress with teardrops.” An extreme close-up of the dress waist in the mirror; Ye Xian’s arm takes up the left side of the frame. The camera tracks down. “Color of sky, color of sea,” the girl says. Hard cut to a close-up on Auntie Yaga as she explains “Ahh. They have used a bolt made from” – another cut to Ye Xian smiling softly and with restraint at her reflection – “their hopes and dreams.”

The sound of fireworks begins. Close-up on Auntie Yaga, who turns to hear them, “The celebration is already begun.” In a wide shot Auntie Yaga rushes in and takes Ye Xian’s arm: “Time for you to go.” They run toward the camera. Cut to a rear view as they run [Auntie Yaga inaudible]. Ye Xian stops and turns to Auntie Yaga, who steps into a medium shot and continues to get closer: “You must never come back here.” The camera moves in to Ye Xian’s terrified face as Auntie Yaga warns: “Never. You hear?” Cut back to Auntie Yaga, whose face fills the frame and whose voice becomes louder as she threatens: “You come back and I will bite your little tits off.” The shot widens slightly. Auntie Yaga shouts at the top of her voice, “You hear me? Now go!” Her voice has a background thunderous sound like steam escaping and the camera moves into an extreme close-up of her eyes, which fill the frame. An abrupt cut to a shot from outside marks the scene’s end.

This sequence focuses on Auntie Yaga as much as on Ye Xian. Like the Baba Yaga her name recalls (see e.g. Armknecht, Rudy, and Forrester 2017), she could be friend or foe, which the scene underlines both visually and narratively. Her placement above the sweatshop, with its Asian occupants, guarded by her three “faithful servants” beneath, along with her approval of Ye Xian’s avoidance of questions about Auntie Yaga’s factory as “dirty laundry” suggests that she may be exploiting workers. Kaplan’s choice to have her played by a man further underscores her ambivalence, as well as invoking binaries with Ye Xian – old/young; ugly/beautiful; male/female; evil/good; disrespect/respect. Representation of the transformation process, none of which is overtly magical, explores these oppositions.

The initial sequence of tranquil contemplation with Ye Xian and the women suggests the process of change could be pleasant. However, the following verbal exchange, initiated by Ye Xian as she recalls the mysterious men on the stairs, is by

no means tranquil. It directly associates Auntie Yaga, herself a most daunting person, with those frightening figures. Her power grows through the scene, emphasized by cuts to close-ups as she initiates all the rest of the discussions. The exchange about the dress culminates in Auntie Yaga's disclosure that the cloth for Ye Xian's dress is indeed magical. Perhaps the fabric of "teardrops" and "hopes and dreams" relates to the experiences of migrants like Ye Xian herself, the women in Mrs Su's parlor and the sweatshop, and the women who transform Ye Xian. Clearly, then, aspects of that experience can be beautiful, but like the dress, they are contained, limited, specific, and surrounded – indeed motivated – by uglier ones. Auntie Yaga shows her most dreadful side in her fireworks monologue. Not only does she simultaneously physically pull and push Ye Xian, Auntie Yaga shouts abuse and threats at her.

In a Chinese version of "Cinderella," the magical yellow cow (not fish) who helps the main character, and is cooked and eaten by the evil stepmother, is actually the girl's mother (Eberhard 1973: 155–60). As in the film, the girl collects the bones. This Cinderella is also helped by an old woman, more unequivocally positive than Auntie Yaga. The sequence of terrifying male figures on the stairs is associated with the tale type ATU 334, "Household of the Witch." Kay Turner (2012) argues that the title character in this tale is best understood as precisely the kind of transformative, sex/gender-ambiguous being who appears in Kaplan's film.

A much friendlier helper figure presides over single mother Marcia's makeover in *Dancehall Queen*. Miss Gordon (played by Pauline Stone Myrie) agrees to make Marcia's first dress design for \$1,500, though the dressmaker usually charges \$8,000, so Marcia can begin her run-up to entering a dancing contest. She wants to make some money to escape her grinding poverty and the inappropriate attentions of Larry (played by Carl Davis) who expects sexual services from her older daughter in recompense for his paying for Marcia's two daughters' education. As the adult single mother of two girls (Marcia's brother also lives with them), she is no ingenue. But she seeks more than just to get by; education for her girls is her priority. This Cinderella is clearly a responsible, if downtrodden, adult. Reid often conveys Marcia's subjugated position in her posture and expression; but when things appear most dire, she manages to rescue herself and her family.

Her decision to enter the dancehall comes when she recognises that current reigning dancehall queen Olivine (played by Patrice Harrison) looks "ordinary" during the day, without her makeup and performance outfit. The contrast between the commonplace Marcia and the extraordinary "Mystery Lady" she becomes in the dancehall offer dramatic moments and crucial transformations. (Boldface below marks Marcia's words when she is in extreme close-up.) Directly after Marcia decides "Boy, it look like no man can help me, so me just have to go help myself," the camera pans right as Larry arrives at Miss Gordon's shop. He steps into the room, centered in a medium shot framed by a door on which a colorful dress hangs. He removes his sunglasses. "Morning" he says and Miss Gordon responds "Hi." Larry stands confidently with his hands on either side of the doorframe, and says "I'm here to pick up that dress for Jeanie Wilson." Cut to the interior of the dressing room as Marcia looks out, door slats casting shadows like bars across her face. Miss Gordon replies "Oh okay. Let me get it for you." Cut to Marcia's point of view through the slats on Miss Gordon handing the dress to Larry. She turns to the dressing room. "What's happened? You sleeping in there?" she shouts.

Cut to Marcia inside the dressing room, looking out. She moves toward the camera in darkness. Cut to a wide shot of the shop, with Larry foregrounded in a rear medium shot. In the background, in full shot Marcia opens the dressing room doors. She sashays out, in a gold outfit and slightly askew blonde wig, swinging her hips. "What you think Miss Gordon?" she says in a purring, disguised voice. Larry adjusts his seat and wipes his mouth. Cut to frontal medium shot of Larry, wiping his mouth again. "Look damn good if you ask me." Marcia in medium shot turns to him. "Thank you." Reverse to Larry. "Those legs, they look like they lead straight to heaven," as he chuckles and raises his hand. Close-up of Marcia. "**You think you could handle this angel?**" Larry leans forward, "I will give it a damn good try." He leans back and chuckles.

Reverse to a close-up of Marcia chuckling. "**Hi.**" Cut back to Larry. "Hi." He gestures toward himself. "I'm Larry. Who are you?" Cut to the wide shot with Marcia's full outfit on display. She opens her arms and sways from side to side: "Who you see is who I am." Close-up of Larry. "One sexy bitch." Reverse to Marcia. "Live and in living color" she says as she moves her legs seductively. Reverse to medium shot of Larry, gesturing with his hand. "I don't want to leave without you. We can link up later?" Close of up Marcia. "**I think I'll have to take a rain check 'pon that, you know.**" She lifts her hand and gestures. "**Tell you what. You give me your card ...**" Reverse to Larry fishing for a card in his pocket. "And I'll call you one day." Larry replies. "All right." Reverse to Marcia, still in close-up, licking her thumb and then reaching her hand toward Larry. "This has my home number as well. In case." His hand reaches out of frame to give Marcia the card. Cut to the wide shot. Marcia flicks the card with her finger: "Great." She raises her hand in farewell. "Maybe I'll see you then." She turns back to the change room.

Close-up of Miss Gordon, looking amused and skeptical. Cut to Larry; he snaps his fingers. "Wooo! Thank you, Miss Gordon." He gets up. Cut to the wide shot as he exits. Cut to Miss Gordon who leans over to make sure he is gone. Close-up on Marcia as she bursts through the change room doors. "He gone?" Reverse to Miss Gordon, laughing. "Yes. You can come out now. Boy, man fool, eh?" She laughs uproariously, shaking her head.

Unlike in some other "Cinderella" films, Marcia's makeover here, and the fact that Larry (who knows her well) doesn't recognize her, is somewhat believable. Yet though she wears a blonde wig and makeup unlike the day-to-day Marcia, the film viewer knows her face. The film thus shows Larry not only as a "fool," but also as a man who thinks of women only in terms of bodies and sex, which makes it impossible for him to recognize the usually dowdy Marcia. Since on a day-to-day basis Larry is uninterested in her, and instead goes after her daughter, he never really looks at her. But Larry's inability to recognize how smart Marcia is, as much as his failure to recognize her physical person, results inevitably in his comeuppance at the film's end. Since he takes himself so seriously, and believes that everyone else does too, the fact that she mocks him publicly, and the crowd around join her laughter at him, shows that he has more than met his match. It also displays that he is wrong in thinking that he is the "Mystery Lady's" Prince (not so) Charming.

In the non-recognition scene described above, directors Elgood and Letts audiovisually demonstrate how Marcia is manipulating Larry. She stands, looking down upon him literally as well as figuratively; he is seated throughout their

interactions. Her three spoken interventions in boldface are presented with Marcia in full face close-up, marking these verbal items – a question, a change of topic, and a refusal – linguistically and visually. By this method, the film shows not only that Marcia renders herself unrecognisable to Larry, but also that she controls their interaction – while cleverly allowing Larry to think *he* has the power. The close-ups of her face underline Marcia’s agency when she demonstrates her most active moves, thus undermining Larry’s patriarchy and heteronormativity.

First, she challenges Larry on his ability to “handle her,” with the implication that he must concern himself with her needs as well as his (not part of his discourse hitherto, which is all about him and his perceptions and desires). He responds not in an unequivocal affirmation of his abilities, but with an acknowledgement that he will “try” – quite an uncharacteristic position. Next, she changes the direction of the discussion by greeting him as if for the first time. Marcia does what Larry should have when he began talking to her – give a polite greeting. She simultaneously implies her better social and interactional skills and disparages Larry’s lack thereof. He must then introduce himself, but since Marcia has initiated the interaction, she avoids reciprocating, with the simultaneous clever retort, truthful response, and avoidance of Larry’s question, “Who you see is who I am.”

This locution cunningly combines truth with a hint for Larry – if he were smart enough to comprehend it – that he *already knows* who she is. But it also asserts that there are in effect two personae present, who she *seems* to be (“who you see”) and who she *actually* is (“who I am”). The tensions between these two discursive figures and Marcia’s ongoing manipulation of those roles inform the film’s main action. Finally, Marcia outright refuses Larry’s invitation to go with him immediately, while leaving open the possibility of further communication (implicitly sexual as well as conversational), initiating a request for his card, and again giving herself the power to continue (or not) their flirtation.

The full views and close-ups showing Marcia’s face – a face Larry should know – remind viewers that her image is perfectly available to him; his failure to recognize her provides amusement not only to Marcia and Miss Gordon, but also to the audience who share their joke at Larry’s expense. This sequence is the first time the audience sees Marcia in control over Larry. Her transformation shifts power – as it does in so many fairy tales, including “Cinderella,” wherein the physical change of the main character’s appearance puts her in a (temporary) position of power with respect to the prince. *Dancehall Queen* queers expectations that Marcia will find a heterosexual rescuer prince; instead she saves herself and her daughters. It is also clearly anti-normative in that all its characters are Black and its setting is a profoundly non-magical, working-class location.

Another underclass-context “Cinderella,” *Maria Full of Grace*, is the story of 17-year-old, Colombian Maria Álvarez working in a flower plantation sweatshop. Seeking an escape, and pregnant, she agrees to smuggle drugs to New York. Her Cinderella make-over in which she becomes a drug mule is literally internal. As Laura Hubner points out, the drugs fit inside Maria, rather than her foot fitting into a shoe (2016: 270). In the scene depicting this transformation, the young man who has recruited Maria takes her on the back of his motorcycle to a pharmacy. After greeting him, the pharmacist leaves. Moments later he opens a door. Maria (like Ye Xian) mounts stairs, arriving in a room where condoms are being prepared into pellets holding the powered drugs.

She sits and watches the process apprehensively. The pharmacist brings her a glass of water and some pills to slow her digestion. He sprays her throat with anaesthetic. An older man enters the room and sits in front of her with a bowl of the large pellets and another of oil. He leans on his cane, his gold ring visible. He takes a pellet, carefully dips it in the oil, and hands it to Maria. She has difficulty swallowing it – he instructs her “Don’t stick your fingers so far inside.” When she still has difficulty, he offers, “If you can’t do this we’ll stop right now.” She replies, “No. I know I can do it.” “Let’s see,” he says. Maria puts the pellet in her mouth. “Relax. Let it slide down.” When she succeeds, he says “Very good,” and dips another pellet.

A hard cut to Maria pacing. “How many is it so far?” she asks. “Twenty-three” the man replies. “Lay down” he says. He reaches to massage her stomach. “What are you doing?” she asks. “Settling them in place” he replies. Someone enters and places a bowl of soup on the table. Maria sits at the table again, and drinks some soup. The man places a pellet in the soup. Finished, she brushes her teeth. The man gives her \$800, her ticket to New York, her passport and visa, the name and address of the hotel she will stay in. Then comes the warning/interdiction; not to return by midnight, but “If any of what you’re carrying...gets lost along the way or doesn’t show up ... we’ll go and have a little conversation ... with your grandmother, your mother ... your sister ... and little Pachito. We know exactly ... how much each one of those 62 pellets weighs. Understood?” Maria nods silently.

Maria is in a minority of recent “Cinderella” films which involve fairy-tale-like interdiction, given by a threatening (fairy) godfather. Just as Cinderella must return from the ball at midnight, Maria must deliver all the drug pellets she has swallowed. Failure will clearly cost her dearly – the stakes are higher than they are for the traditional Cinderella. Maria risks her own life – as the film shows, the pellets can rupture whereupon the mule inevitably dies of an overdose. She would imperil both her own and her family’s lives should she try to keep and sell some of the drugs. This film shares, however, the potentially unrealistic happy endings of the other “Cinderella” movies I discuss here. Maria’s choice to remain in the US, to offer her unborn baby better opportunities than in Columbia, counters the realities for illegal Latina immigrants even in pre-Trump America. As Hubner argues, though the film’s “prolonged empathy with young female drug smugglers is in itself progressive,” the fairy-tale happy ending limits the film’s potentially radical elements, giving a “positive spin on her new surroundings, rather than offering a direct critique of North America’s complicity in the sweatshop trade [Maria] has left behind. It upholds the fantasy of an improved life in the US” (2016: 271).

Two single mothers, two illegal immigrants, and a lesbian opera singer queer the conventional idea of Cinderella as an innocent ingenue. Perhaps Ye Xian is most like the North American expectation of virginal purity, but the fact that she is Chinese (though played by a Vietnamese actor) nevertheless undermines expectations (as *Clockwork*’s Celeste trenchantly describes it, “Grimm, Walt Disney ... Nordic stuff. The dominant iconography”) – as in the other films. But though none of these Cinderellas looks as expected, and indeed not one is as passive as some of her traditional counterparts, each has a vision of the life she seeks, and each uses a transformational moment or moments to achieve it.

The films’ visuals support those transformations as both Cinderella-like and distinctive to each character. Though all offer realistic changes and processes, not the

enchantments and magic seen in the traditional story, elements of *Clockwork* and *Fish* implicate a preternatural, racialized, and implicitly queer story, and the brutal realism of *Dancehall* and *Maria* are undermined by the unexpected happy endings in both. I suggest that these films, in bringing queer and racialized primary characters to the story, don't betray or reverse more familiar versions, but instead manifest how fairy tales' already anti-normative structures can be used to represent a realm of enchantment that avoids the conventional Disneyfication too often expected of well-known fairy tales.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE FAIRY TALE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE



Jeana Jorgensen

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary American authors rewrite fairy tales in a dazzling variety of genres: poetry, young adult fiction, children's literature, picture books, literary short stories, paranormal romance, erotica/smut, science fiction/fantasy, and more. Though these texts are not all feminist, many of them engage with gender and sexuality in ways that range from normative to subversive, destabilizing fixed concepts of gender utilizing various narrative strategies.

Before addressing gender and sexuality in American fairy-tale literature, it is useful to briefly review scholarship on gender and sexuality in fairy tales. The feminist inquiry into gender in fairy tales got its start in the 1970s. I define gender as the composite of culturally constructed characteristics of masculinity and femininity, best viewed on a spectrum rather than as a binary. Gender encompasses one's internal sense of identity, one's external expression, the roles one inhabits, and the norms and ideals one should – societally speaking – aspire to. Gender is distinct from one's anatomical, bodily, or genetic traits, often glossed as “sex,” as well as from one's sexuality, the constellation of desires and experiences that orient us relationally to others (and ourselves). While language about male vs. female fairy-tale characters is problematic because it reifies the gender binary and assumes a default cisgender orientation (cisgender meaning that one's gender identity aligns with the sex that one is assigned at birth), I retain it here because the bulk of the literary and critical texts observe this patterning.

Studies of gender in fairy tales tend to investigate representations and constructions of masculinity and femininity, with special attention paid to beauty, agency, domesticity, and victimhood. Men and women in fairy tales are portrayed and treated differently, though we still need more reception studies based on fieldwork to determine how these portrayals impact received notions of gender. Scholarly explorations of sexuality in fairy tales that do not simply map to a default linking of gender with sexuality are, in contrast, recent. Max Lüthi contended that “there is no true eroticism” in fairy tales (1982: 69), though recently scholars like myself (Jorgensen 2008), Lewis Seifert (1996), Kay Turner and Pauline Greenhill (2012), and a handful of others have been contesting this statement. We assert that there has always been sex in fairy tales, that it has been marginalized thanks to social norms and censorship,

and that it, too, follows patriarchal patterns of assigning value and possibility based on notions of gender. Drawing on recent feminist and queer fairy-tale scholarship by Cristina Bacchilega, Vanessa Joosen, and Greenhill among others, I thus argue for the importance of intersectional and especially homosocial interpretations of gender and sex in fairy-tale literature in contemporary America.

In surveying the shapes gender and sexuality take in contemporary American fairy-tale literature, certain patterns emerge: the revision of feminine scripts, a comparatively slower exploration of alternative masculinities, and the layering of gender roles onto sexual norms. These patterns persist across literary genres, revealing a remarkable tenacity of tradition derived from existing fairy-tale tropes. The field of contemporary American literature is broad, and hardly narrowed by adding a focus on fairy tales, and thus my analysis is necessarily limited, skewing toward adult and fantastic fiction of the last few decades. Other scholars have already analyzed important authors such as Robert Coover (Benson 2008), Margaret Atwood (Bacchilega 1997), Jane Yolen (Rodríguez 2002), Donna Jo Napoli (Hughes 2016), and Anne Sexton (summarized in Haase 2000), who will receive limited attention here.

PRE-TEXTS AND INTERTEXTS

When studying folklore in literature, I follow Alan Dundes's two-part model of identifying and then interpreting the transformations of folklore at hand (1965). Authors of fairy tales in North American contexts rely on a few key points of departure for their creative reinterpretations, which in turn impacts how gender and sexuality are imagined. One of the best-known literary adaptations of fairy tales, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, was published in England in 1979. It soon became a formative intertext for writers exploring gender and sexuality in North American contexts. Similarly, the work of Neil Gaiman, a British author who now lives in the US, has been groundbreaking. His short story "Snow Glass Apples," retelling "Snow White" with vampirism and necrophilia, exemplifies his innovative approach. Also important is Irish-born Canadian writer Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch* (1993) which queers fairy tales with a focus on women's desires for other women, forging new paths for writers on both sides of the Atlantic.

The impact of Disney is undeniable in this realm too. Numerous children's picture books retell the Disney fairy tales under the Disney franchise, while in other instances, the visual influence of Disney shines through in character costuming and descriptions. Responses to the ideal of the Disney princess, which is distinct from the heroines inherited from European folk and literary traditions in many ways, abound in literary retellings of fairy tales. American tale collections also offer potential intertexts for retellings.

The structure and style of contemporary American literature reworking fairy tales are diverse, though the popularity of edited collections of tales is reminiscent of how many of the first published fairy tales were also collections, usually within frame tales (e.g. *The Arabian Nights*; Straparola's *Le Piacevoli notti*). Many of these anthologies explicitly attend to gender and sexuality, such as the books Kate Bernheimer edited focusing on femininity and masculinity respectively, *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Women Writers Explore Their Favorite Fairy Tales* (2002) and *Brothers and Beasts: An Anthology of Men on Fairy Tales* (2008). Andrew Teverson notes that

both “seek to present fairy tales more affirmatively than has become conventional in criticism, as narratives that are capable of validating diverse forms of gendered and sexual identity” (2013: 138).

As Joosen demonstrates, many fairy-tale retellings respond to theories from feminism and psychoanalysis. Several of these works, published in America, have posited relationships between gendered and sexualized psychology and enculturation, which in turn have been expressed in fairy-tale retellings. As Joosen writes: “retellings and illustrations truly become part of the intertextual dialogue, talking in different and often more ambivalent voices than the critics but actively and creatively contributing to our understanding and experience of the fairy tale” (2011b: 48). The fairy-tale retellings examined below are thus part of a larger dialogue about what gender is, how we come to learn about gender and sexual roles, and how such roles can (and should be) conformed to or contested.

While a number of the texts discussed here are postmodern fairy tales in Bacchilega’s use of the term (as reflexive revisions of traditional tales) other texts might be better classified as pastiche, in that they rework the “stuff” of fairy tales without conforming to a single plot (Jorgensen 2007). Many contemporary adaptations of tales in American literature also link together tale plots considered separate by scholars in a way that bridges postmodern and pastiche tale. This practice of combining multiple fairy-tale plots occurs in a variety of contemporary American media – as is evident from the *Shrek* films (2001–2010) and the *Once Upon a Time* TV series (2011–). Contemporary adaptation also frequently involves attention to the supposedly “original” or “darker” facets of early fairy-tale traditions. For example, a retelling of ATU 510B, “Knight of the Sun, Moon, and Stars” by Angie Dickinson (2017) has the incestuous king driven mad by Rumpelstiltskin’s curse upon being denied the first-born child, who becomes the princess who must escape the marriage plot.

The very nature of this type of intertextuality may well be gendered. Veronica Schanoes theorizes that the relationship between revisions and their pre-texts replicates that between daughters and mothers, and indeed, fairy-tale daughters are often represented as revisions of their mothers (2014). Schanoes sees this demonstrated in British author Tanith Lee’s novel *White as Snow* (2000), which combines the “Snow White” plot with the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone, as well as in American author Kathryn Davis’s multilayered exploration of Hans Christian Andersen’s life and tales, *The Girl Who Trod on a Loaf* (1993). As Bacchilega reminds us, “the twenty-first century fairy-tale web reaches back in history and across space to intersect with multiple story-weaving traditions” (2013: 20). Articulating these links while maintaining a focus on contemporary American literature thus requires awareness of the creative/critical dialogue, the international nature of the fairy-tale tradition, and the gendered nature of reproducing self and story.

DENATURALIZING FEMININITY

Fairy tales in contemporary American literature tend to question the strictures of femininity, critiquing the “good girl” stereotypically found in Disney and various folktale collections, along with expectations of heteronormative behavior. A major narrative strategy employed here involves unlinking “natural” traits like beauty from assumptions of goodness or morality, and the “naturalness” of femininity from the

experiences of tale characters. While examples abound of retellings across the many fairy-tale plot types that feature female protagonists, this section focuses on ATU 709, “Snow White.” I choose these “Snow White” retellings in large part because, as Bacchilega has pointed out, folkloric versions of tale type 709 tend to incorporate a “patriarchal frame” that is presented as fact (1997: 34). Typically, we see the patriarchal frame in the voice of the magic mirror, in the equation of the snow-white girlchild with nature, and in the lack of Snow White’s voice and agency (34–5). Bacchilega argues that “If the fairy tale symbolically seeks to represent some unquestionable natural state of being, postmodern fairy tales seek to expose this state’s generic and gendered ‘lie’ or artifice” (35). Similarly, the texts examined here engage with both gender and genre in noteworthy ways.

In their introduction to *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms* (2012), Greenhill and Turner characterize queer theory’s defining principles as problematizing sex, gender, and sexuality (11). Greenhill and Turner pay special attention to transgender theory and transbiology theory, the latter of which “concerns scientific and popular representations of animals (including humans who masquerade as or transform into another species ... and/or mess with hard-and-fast distinctions between species)” (11). The critical interrogation of gender and sexuality in “Snow White” retellings involves unlinking normative distinctions between humans and other species, as well as a decoupling of established connections between appearance and nature. Judith Butler [1990] notes that while gender appears to map neatly to sex, sex is “itself a gendered category ... naturalized but not natural” (1999: 143). The naturalization of women’s gender, sex, and sexuality through folk narrative is thus a mechanism for enculturation and social control. Homosociality, or “social bonds between persons of the same sex” (Flood 2008: 341) and intersectionality, or how multiple identity factors affect and compound one another (Crenshaw 1993), are also key here.

Whether rejecting heterosexuality or rejecting the notion of a scripted fairy-tale sexuality, these Snow Whites talk back to tradition in ways that illuminate both the intertwining of gender and sexuality and the transformations of fairy-tale texts through rewriting. As Wolfgang Mieder writes in his introduction to *Disenchantments: An Anthology of Modern Fairy Tale Poetry* (1985), retellings of this tale type (particularly in poetry) tend to focus on facets of gender and sexuality in Snow White’s life such as “the sexual implications of her staying alone at the house with seven dwarfs who quickly, in modern interpretations, become transfigured into perverts” (xi). The fact that the “Snow White” retellings Mieder chooses to discuss have these features, despite his collection not having an explicit feminist focus, demonstrates the extent to which gender and sexuality is foregrounded in retellings.

Good girls and the rest

Many American retellings subvert the concept that fairy-tale heroines are saccharinely sweet and good. They do this by denaturalizing links between beauty and femininity, as well as by recasting formerly passive female characters as active and villainous characters as sympathetic.

The passivity of fairy-tale heroines has been famously criticized (summarized in Haase 2000). Certain adaptations reverse this trend by having heroines rescue themselves. James Thurber’s “The Little Girl and the Wolf” (1939) exemplifies this by

showing the little girl shooting the wolf dead with an automatic from her basket (British author Roald Dahl's poetic retelling of 1982 is similar, with the heroine using a pistol to kill the wolf). The Canadian-Jamaican author Nalo Hopkinson's fairy-tale short stories in the collection *Skin Folk* (2001) likewise show female protagonists rejecting convention and taking charge of their fate. As Bacchilega writes of these stories, they "break with the conventional morality that punishes women for expressing active sexual desire or anger, the regulatory moral of the tales where the submissive 'good' girl is rewarded" (2013: 41).

Even heroines who may be regarded as active in the source narratives, such as Gerda in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen," may be transformed in modern revisions. Kelly Link's story "Travels with the Snow Queen" (1996) exemplifies this by showing the protagonist, having sought her lover Kay, electing to leave him to his icy enchantment in order to go into business with the Snow Queen. Together, they open a tourist agency for women to traverse fairy-tale territory. This exemplifies the trend in recuperating women's platonic relationships, and transforming them from competitive to cooperative. Homosocial bonds thus become a way for women in these retellings to surmount shared obstacles, rather than a site of strife. Joosen observes of Nicole Cooley's poem "Snow White" that "a community of sisters is described, there is a willing exchange of the apple between women" (2011a: 175) as they cooperate to escape the patriarchy, even if the only way out is death.

Of course, not every depiction of femininity in fairy-tale literature seeks to disrupt it. Anne Rice's erotic *Sleeping Beauty* trilogy (1983–1985) reinforces the supposed naturalness of female submission. Still other revisions upend reader expectations: Gregory Maguire's books *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995) and *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* (1999) tell the backstories of previously-maligned female characters. The result of all these innovations is a more diverse cast of female fairy-tale characters, whose femininity is not inherently tied to their virtue.

Unnatural beauties

The representation of physical appearance is of especial significance in the disruption of the links between gender and nature in fairy-tale retellings. In Greenhill's work on serial-killer fairy tales such as "Bluebeard," she emphasizes that a queer approach to the tales also involves vision and appearance, since "processes of male looking and the objectification of and violence against women ... are narratively disrupted, overturned, reversed, and/or turned against male figures by female figures" (2008: 149). Thus, paying attention to how physical appearance is represented in these tellings, and whose vision is privileged, can clue us in to gender and power. In another vein, Seanan McGuire's novel *Indexing* (2013) exemplifies making feminine beauty uncanny. The plot follows a team working for a secret agency that investigates and stops narrative incursions into our reality, using the Aarne-Thompson tale type index as a guide to narratives trying to break through into our world. The viewpoint character, Henry, is a potential Snow White who must work to keep her narrative tendencies in check. Henry has the characteristic coloring of the fairy-tale heroine; however, translated into the real world, the look is disturbing. She states: "A true Snow White looks more like a horror movie than a fairy tale come true" (99). She

also observes that without realistic makeup caked on she resembles “the vanguard of an impending alien invasion” (46). Thus, typically feminine fairy-tale beauty is not, in fact, beautiful in the novel.

In Francesca Lia Block’s story “Snow” in the collection *The Rose and the Beast* (2000), Snow’s beauty is framed in naturalistic terms: when she bites the poisoned apple, she swoons and her skin turns faintly green, the same pale “green color as certain white flowers” (26). When the gardener comes to wake her, he breathes her in “like one would inhale a bouquet.” (29). And yet in Snow’s mind, these stereotypical attributions of beauty are illusory: “Snow had never thought of herself as beautiful. For her, beauty was Bear’s voice telling her bedtime stories, and the way Buck’s eyes shone and Lynx’s small, graceful body” (23). Transbiologically speaking, if Snow is a flower and her caretakers are animals, not only is beauty in the eye of the beholder, but the beholding eyes need not always be human, or male.

Appearance is weaponized in Catherynne M. Valente’s novella *Six-Gun Snow White* (2013), in which the protagonist, half Native American, is mockingly nicknamed “Snow White” by her abusive stepmother who treats her as subhuman. Snow White disavows the famous beauty contest, scoffing: “Everybody knows no half-breed cowgirl can be as beautiful as a rich white lady” (62). By calling attention to the ethnic and class dimensions of aesthetics, Valente’s retelling interrogates the fairy tale’s naturalization of beauty scripts.

Escaping heteronormativity

Many of these retellings investigate sexuality, from sexual orientation to sexual expression and behavior. The women characters who are foregrounded in the essays in *Transgressive Tales* open up new possibilities for understanding women’s desires by “their adventuresome nature, their insistent self-possession, their refusal to succumb passively to authoritarian dictates, and their disinterest in necessarily choosing to partner appropriately (i.e. normatively and singularly)” (Turner and Greenhill 2012: 21). The sexual partnerings in many retellings do similar work, through various depictions of desire.

“Waking,” a poem by Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman (2016/17), is notable for not only having the female protagonists recoil from the cruel, compulsory heterosexuality of their princes, but also for having them turn toward each other. The poem is distinctively structured, with quatrains depicting the individual curses of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty arranged on opposite sides of the page. As the two women dream while enchanted, their stanzas move together, toward the center of the page. They dream of each other, and their stanzas almost merge. Awakened by their respective princes, their stanzas separate again. Seeking the dream memory of one another, they are united, sharing a single stanza concluding the poem. I imagine their relationship as a queer one, guided by textual cues such as the use of fragrance and the sound of one another’s voices when the characters find each other in the waking world.

In revised fairy tales, the spectrum from homosocial to homosexual encounters for female characters is often presented positively, in contrast to traditional fairy tales in which homosocial encounters are sites of danger for women (competition for spouses, beauty contests, etc.). In *Ash* (2009) by Malinda Lo, the Cinderella-like

protagonist makes a bargain with a faerie man that she must fulfill, but along the way falls in love with Kaisa, the King's Huntress. In Valente's *Six-Gun Snow White*, Snow White takes up with seven female outlaws, sharing a bed with one of them. These are more explicitly queer literary narratives, comparable to the erotic fairy tales for the adult fantasy market that appear in *Myth & Magic: Queer Fairy Tales*. Highlights include the Snow Queen seducing a woman named Kai away from her girlfriend Gerda in "Heartless," two lesbian retellings of "Little Red Riding Hood," and a girl named Jackie falling in love with a giantess in "Beastalk" (2014).

Sexual awakenings often follow heterosexual patterns. Short erotic fiction frequently depicts women who are innocent of sexuality being initiated into its pleasures by male protagonists (discussed in Jorgensen 2008), and Rice's *Sleeping Beauty* trilogy follows this pattern initially as well. In Block's story "Snow," Snow begins to sexually awaken, exploring her body by herself under her nightgown, spurred by the visit of the gardener who had first deposited her with the dwarfs (2000: 17–18). The dwarves know enough to understand that they cannot hang on to her and deny her nascent sexuality forever, which is why they admit the gardener after she has been poisoned. But though the gardener's kiss awakens her, she refuses him: she refuses love, which she now knows can be poisoning and possessive. She happily proclaims herself to be a freak, just like her seven caretakers, and decides to stay with them forever.

Snow's enfreakment is notable as a strategy for enabling fairy-tale women to refuse feminine norms. Many of the female characters in Valente's duology *The Orphan's Tales* (2006 and 2007) are similarly transgressive in both appearance and behavior, sometimes to the point of being grotesque (Jorgensen 2011). These retellings depict women who transgress some gender and sexual norms without becoming completely unmoored in the social world. They are not abjected or otherwise punished. Similarly, the female protagonist in M.J. Haag's "Beauty and the Beast" retelling *Deceit: A Beastly Tale Part 2* (2015) literally has sexual congress with the Beast, and is depicted in such a way as to gain the reader's sympathy, not lose it.

In disentangling gender, sexuality, and the natural world, these retellings engage with folkloric and literary conventions in significant ways. Of the retellings discussed here, the Block story is most explicitly realistic, with Valente's novella close behind. Joosen, in her work on realism in "Snow White" retellings, defines realistic as "everything that can be explained by empirical science" (2007: 230). In contrast, magic or fantastic content contravenes reality, as is the case in "Waking" and *Indexing*, though they all show us that narrative can question naturalization regardless of the degree of mimesis. The many literary genres described in this chapter that adapt fairy-tale material adopt different stances toward reality, and despite their varied conventions still disentangle the imbrication of fairy-tale femininity and feminine sexuality.

BOYISH AND BEASTLY MASCULINITIES

Depictions of masculinity in contemporary American retellings of fairy tales tend to coalesce around two representative types of men who approach and resolve conflicts differently: good-looking nice guys and dangerous monster-men. Good-looking but internally monstrous men do appear, though they do not seem to receive the same amount of attention as these others. In the context of the discussion above, however, it is notable that authors are revising the representation of masculinity in retold fairy

tales at a different pace and with different emphases than femininity, in large part due to differences in the construction of hegemonic masculinity and idealized femininity.

Hegemonic masculinity is “a normative conception to which men are accountable, a form of masculinity in relation to which subordinated masculinities, as well as femininities, are defined” (Kane 2010: 54). As Emily Kane notes, summarizing the pioneering work of R.W. Connell, hegemonic masculinity has class, racial, and sexual dimensions, and serves to legitimate male domination (as such, there is no parallel concept of “hegemonic femininity” since there is nothing over which femininity can rule). Further, Connell asserts that “among the features of hegemonic masculinity are aggression, limited emotionality, and heterosexuality” (in Kane 2010: 54). In addressing the strictures of hegemonic (also glossed as toxic) masculinity, with its strict adherence to patriarchal norms that replicate misogyny and homophobia, authors transform male characters into approachable and sensitive men on the one hand, and violently aggressive but sometimes redeemable men on the other.

Female characters seem to be represented as individuals, grappling with the patriarchy, while antagonistic male characters are primarily generic representatives of the patriarchy. Of texts discussed above, the princes in the poem “Waking” are brutal. The one who wakes Snow White holds a pair of iron shoes in his fist and insists “that true brides never change,” while the one who wakes Sleeping Beauty tells her that he likes her “best when ... silent” (Cleto and Warman 2016/2017). Comparably, the gardener in Block’s story “Snow” does not trust himself to raise the infant protagonist because he can picture what she will look like when she grows up. These are not nice men. In contrast, the dwarves in “Snow” and Jeff in *Indexing* are kind, gentle, and loving, thus establishing a spectrum of masculinity.

Pretty boys and gallant princes

Similar to the typical Disney depictions of female fairy-tale characters, the narrow characterization of men (as rescuers, heroes, and princes) provides fodder for authors to contest. Just as female fairy-tale characters in literary retellings have had their appearances uncoupled from their morality or worth, male characters have been portrayed in ways that question such associations. However, the same importance has not been placed on male characters’ appearances in traditional European fairy tales (Jorgensen 2012), hence this exploration of gender identity plays out differently on men’s bodies as opposed to women’s bodies.

One key feature of hegemonic masculinity is that it is a performative gender identity; that is, it is not inherent or internal to all men everywhere, but rather emerges interactionally, with each iteration of a behavioral trait operating as a reifying act that naturalizes the sense of stable identity. There is nothing essentially masculine about fairy-tale characters who are gallant and good, and yet their representation reifies a specific vision of manhood. Prince Kai, in Marissa Mayer’s *The Lunar Chronicles*, exemplifies the nice boy, the pretty prince who is unfailingly honorable and good. After Kai finds out that Cinder is a cyborg, he is not repulsed by her manufactured parts, which are stigmatized in this society, but rather by the fact that she has potentially been using her Lunar ability to glamor her appearance and thus trick him. Deception, not difference, is Kai’s problem. After Cinder’s imprisonment, he does not respond in ways that hegemonic masculinity might demand: “His fingers tightened

into a fist and he drew back, wishing he had someone he could talk to” (*Scarlet* 2013: 64). Captain Thorne from the same series is a lovable rascal who is good-looking and develops a soft spot for the vulnerable Lunar girl, Cress. The essential goodness of both men is never questioned.

Michael Cunningham’s short story “A Wild Swan” tells of the prince who, unlike his brothers in ATU 451, is not fully disenchanted from swan to human. Shamed by his family for the wing in place of his right arm, he leaves home, but finds it difficult:

He could only get the most menial of jobs. He had no marketable skills (most princes don’t), and just one working hand. Every now and then a woman grew interested, but it always turned out that she was drawn to some Leda fantasy, or worse, hoped her love could bring him back his arm.

(2015: 11)

Still, the prince persists in his lonely life and finds peace with his swan wing. Notably, his heterosexuality goes unquestioned, and his class status, while remarked on, remains a part of his identity. Similarly, male protectors surround the titular character in K.M. Shea’s novel *Snow Queen: Heart of Ice* (2016), taking up arms to fight by her side when their nation is invaded. The inherent goodness of these men, regardless of their degree of hereditary nobility, is rarely questioned. That they and similar characters populate literary fairy tales can be read as a comment on contemporary attempts to recuperate masculinity by splitting it into positive and negative portrayals.

Monsters and demon lovers

Beastly fairy-tale men, such as Little Red Riding Hood’s wolf and the beast from various monster bridegroom tales in the ATU 425 family, populate fairy tales in literature. They range from protagonists to antagonists, critiquing hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy in certain ways but upholding them in others. Much like their folkloric antecedents, these male characters are frequently redeemable even when grossly violent.

Wolf in *The Lunar Chronicles* is one such figure. A Lunar citizen whose genes have been modified with those of wolves to turn him into a fighting machine, Wolf is part of a plot to cause chaos on Earth. His encounter with the human girl Scarlet changes him; however, he remains dangerous to her and she must plead with him not to kill her despite having just killed his own brother to protect Scarlet. Another beastly bridegroom is the vampire Edward from Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* books. As Natalie Robinson observes, “Edward must stay in strict control of his carnal urges or the unthinkable could happen; after all, he is a beast” (2011: 226), and this positioning subverts a feminist reading of the *Twilight* series by disguising “... messages intended as warnings [and] presenting them as messages of empowerment” (234). Read transbiologically, both monstrous men are positioned as non-human hunters who, despite species difference separating them from the heroines, are nonetheless deserving of sympathy and love. It is not their fault that they are animalistic and potentially brutal; the plots of each narrative displace blame for their non-human state onto other entities, rendering the predatory facets of their masculinity out of their control.

Ash transforms the typical ATU 510A older female donor figure into a fairy man who woos the titular protagonist and extracts from her a promise to become his in return for magical disguises. Sidhean, like other redeemable men, hurts the heroine to save her. When Ash wanders too close to a fairy circle, he responds vehemently: “He was furious; she could see the muscles of his face taut beneath his white skin ... Sidhean dragged her out of the circle, his fingers nearly crushing her arm” (Lo 2009: 123). Sidhean, cursed to fall in love with a mortal girl as punishment for all the lives he took, loves Ash enough to release her after she gives herself to him for a night. Love is transformative, a message common in monster bridegroom tales.

Many of the male antagonists in fairy-tale retellings are (would-be) rapists who reinforce and benefit from hegemonic masculinity. In *Six-Gun Snow White*, Snow White’s father coerces her mother, a woman from the Crow nation, into marrying him. She dies shortly after giving birth to their daughter. When Snow White runs away from home, she goes to ground among miners, and a cattleman tries to rape her, finding where she sleeps: “if she didn’t like it, well, a good pound-down puts anyone in an amenable mood” (Valente 2013: 79). In E.J. Gahagan’s “Sneewittchen” (2014), Snow White is promised in marriage to Prince Charming, who is cruel and violent. When Snow White runs away to escape this match, she falls in love with a witch in the forest, whom Prince Charming calls a “loathsome whore” (Gahagan 2014: 163) when he comes to claim his bride. The witch transforms him into a frog so that she and Snow White can continue to live together. In performing hegemonic masculinity, these antagonists model behavior that is abhorrent precisely because it is an exaggeration of normative behavior for men.

The uses of heterosexism and homosociality

As noted above, some fairy-tale retellings contest the heterosexual patterns found in traditional fairy tales. There are both structural and psychological components upholding these patterns. As Alan Dundes observes: “If [Vladimir] Propp’s formula is valid, then the major task in fairy tales is to replace one’s original family through marriage” (1989: 124). Thus, the bulk of fairy tales depict the emotional and sexual maturation process happening in a heterosexual context.

This context remains an important one for many male characters in American literary fairy tales. Masculinity studies scholars argue that strong connections exist between homosociality and masculinity. As Michael Flood articulates these links, some key points emerge: (hetero)sexual activity is one of the main pathways to masculine status, and male–male friendships are prioritized over both platonic and sexual male–female relationships (2008: 342). Within fairy tales, heterosexuality remains linked with becoming masculine, while heterosocial relationships maintain importance for male characters.

Although many female protagonists in the texts considered here establish loving and healing relationships with other women, male characters are less likely to grow through homosocial bonds with one another. Wolf, Kai, and Captain Thorne from the *Lunar* books all show male characters developing in tandem with their female counterparts, with each man evolving emotional maturity and awareness in response to the female character he is paired with. The homosocial context for Wolf especially is a painful one, involving forced conscription and involuntary medical experiments.

Kai had a positive relationship with his father, whose death left him feeling unmoored but his major development as a character happens in regard to the turbulence the female cyborg Cinder causes in his life and the larger political arena. Cinder, in turn, develops as a character not only in relation to Kai but also to her stepsisters and her (female-identified) android Iko.

Male homosexual relationships appear in some retellings, primarily adult erotic literature. A notable exception is the use of teenage male Cinderella-like characters in young adult fiction (Macleod 2016). The stories of *Myth & Magic* include “Goldie and the Three Bears,” about a man named Goldie hooking up with three men at a club to varying degrees of pleasure; a retelling of Andersen’s “The Red Shoes” featuring a young man who cross-dresses and finds a male dance partner; and a retelling with two male protagonists of Andersen’s “The Snow Queen” titled “The Snow King.” Unlike the lesbian relationships discussed above, these relationships tend to be presented as desirable from the story’s start, whereas lesbian relationships are often established during flight or as refuge from compulsory heterosexuality.

INTERSECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Due to the immensity of the topic, it is impossible to list every retelling of a fairy tale in contemporary American literature, nor all the potential theoretical approaches. The intersection of gender with disability, for instance, should inform any interpretation of Mayer’s (2012) *Cinder*, given the eponymous character’s prosthetic foot. Race, ethnicity, and nationality inform many retellings, beyond the ones by Hopkinson mentioned above, and as such deserve more critical attention. Transgender and non-binary characters remain a minority, as do characters practicing marginalized sexualities and relationship styles such as polyamory and BDSM.

With their power to normalize gender, sexuality, and relationships from familial to romantic, fairy tales provide narrative models for identity and behavior. Transformed into literature, such tales expand in aesthetic and structural range to reach multiple audiences and convey diverse messages about gender and sexuality. Reading the characters in these tales as empowered by their transbiological connections to the natural world – or not – and in terms of how homosocial relationships are healing or harmful yields insights into the social construction of identity through folklore and literature. As Butler states, “the category of sex and the naturalized institution of heterosexuality are constructs, socially instituted and socially regulated fantasies ... not natural categories but political ones (categories that prove that recourse to the ‘natural’ in such contexts is always political)” (1999: 161). In light of the political character of such naturalized concepts as gender and sexuality, it becomes essential to note the asymmetrical construction of femininity and masculinity, heterosexual and otherwise, in retellings. These tales thus provide an excellent case study of what it means to pull apart sex, gender, and sexuality, and to (re-)present and recombine them, showing multiple ways to wake up Snow Whites and humanize beasts.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

FAIRY TALES AND DIGITAL CULTURE



Brittany Warman

INTRODUCTION

It is one o'clock in the morning and you are seized by intense curiosity, a sudden desire to know the name of the actor who performed the part of the Beast in the recent live-action Disney adaptation of the fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast" (2017). You pull up your Internet browser on your smartphone, type a few words into your search bar, find the name you're looking for (Dan Stevens), and then wonder how many film adaptations of "Beauty and the Beast" there actually have been over the years. You head over to the website for the *International Fairy-Tale Filmography* and search in their database, finding 31 films with that title alone (Greenhill, Magnus-Johnston, and Zipes 2013). The first film on their list is a 1952 film from the Russian Federation called *Alenkiy tsvetochek* or *The Scarlet Flower, Beauty and the Beast*, and/or *Beauty and the Beast: A Tale of the Crimson Flower*. You're intrigued by the unfamiliar title, read about it on a few blogs, and finally discover the whole animated feature has been uploaded to watch for free on *YouTube* (SuperCanopus 2015). You now spend the next 40 minutes watching a wonderful old fairy-tale film on your phone when, by all rights, you should have been in bed hours ago.

This sequence of events is, of course, an example of how we interact with fairy tales in an increasingly digital world and, indeed, this is what "digital culture" means. The term "has become so ubiquitous, so pervasive, and so familiar" in our modern times, that we don't often stop to think about what is actually meant when it is used (Doueih 2011: 12). It can be described as

a set of intertwined technologies that have produced and continue to produce social practices that, for the time being at least, either challenge or question the viability of, even the legitimacy of, some well-established social and cultural norms and their associated legal framework ... digital culture is made up of communication and information exchange modes that displace, redefine, and reshape knowledge into new forms, formats, and the methods for acquiring and transmitting such knowledge.

(12)

In easier to understand terms, however, it is simply the kind of cultural experience I have elaborated above. Digital culture encompasses the Internet, video games, online video, programmable alarm clocks, cyborgs, smartphones, and a huge variety of other things beside. It requires its own kind of literacy, one that most of us are still learning, even developing (12). And fairy tales, which may seem at first glance to be somewhat incompatible with digital culture, are thriving in a frontier that provides an important new space to engage and play.

A full understanding of fairy tales and digital culture would expand to fill a far larger space than I have in this chapter – even a work devoted exclusively to fairy tales on the Internet would demand examinations of everything from digital humanities projects, to web archives such as Heidi Anne Heiner’s *SuLaLune Fairy Tales* (1998) or D.L. Ashliman’s *Folktexts* (1996) (see Meder 2016), to memes, to online gaming, to podcasts, to online journals, to social media, including the wildly popular hashtag #folklorethursday, initiated by Dee Dee Chainey, Willow Winsham, and Seline Stevenson (2015). Fairy-tale scholars have made significant advances in digital humanities research in particular, with projects such as the aforementioned *International Fairy-Tale Filmography* (Greenhill, Magnus-Johnston, and Zipes 2013) and the *At the Crossroads of Data and Wonder: Algorithmic Visualizations of Fairy Tales in Television* project (McDonald and Rudy 2013) at the forefront of this work. With my limitations of space in mind, however, I have chosen to focus this discussion on three different and thus far less critically considered corners of the fairy-tale Internet: the blogosphere, webcomics, and online video. I have chosen these three areas in particular because each engage deeply with one of the central tenets of digital culture – that it is a *participatory* culture, one that calls upon “individuals to produce content themselves” and “shift away from producer hegemony to audience or consumer power” (Miller 2011: 87). A participatory culture is one that “contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship,” one that does not see “media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles” (Jenkins 2006a: 3), and one that views audiences as “active, critically engaged, and creative” (Jenkins 2006b: i). As Carol Vernallis argues, “the new media landscape ... allows a person to think more creatively. New relations are constructed” (2013: 29). Blogs, comics, and online videos are three of the main areas in which private individuals, through our ever-expanding digital culture, influence and shape the world – including our relationships to and understandings of fairy tales.

I have also limited myself to materials in English, though I do include texts from beyond the Americas. I do so with both the recognition that the reach of fairy tales online extends far beyond these limitations and with the conviction that the Internet offers uncountable possibilities for international and cross-cultural sharing and collaboration. While the ever-debated dangers of globalization should be kept in mind – and, make no mistake, the fairy-tale Internet is indeed “bound to and structured by the circulation of multinational capital” in multiple and problematic ways (Bacchilega 2013: 14–15) – the same factors that spark these worries also facilitate the project of decolonizing fairy-tale texts and fairy-tale studies in ways never before possible (see Bacchilega 2013 and in this volume, Haase 2010, and Zipes 2011).

THE FAIRY-TALE BLOGOSPHERE

At their inception, ‘blogs,’ short for ‘Weblogs,’ were:

online diaries with links to Websites of presumed interest such as traditional media outlets or other blogs. They came into being in the mid 1990s when Web designers put up personal journals at their home pages and linked to each other. In 1999, a company named Pyra introduced software that enabled people who were not skilled in Web design to create and manage their own blogs, and the phenomenon burgeoned.

(Keren 2006: 5)

On today’s Internet, blogs remain one of the main venues through which one can jump into a conversation and share ideas. Their relative permanence, when compared with social media at least, encourages a level of commitment and continuous engagement. Jenkins argues that blogs are one of the key ways in which the Internet “increase[es] cultural diversity and lowe[rs] barriers to cultural participation” (2006b: 180). Whether it is by posting fairy-tale news, writing personal reflections on tales, or responding poetically in the voice of a fairy-tale character – all specific blogs discussed below – these individual websites provide the creative freedom to find new, unique, and fascinating ways to engage with the fairy-tale form.

While blogs certainly began as personal diaries, one is more likely today to be familiar with websites that use the blog format to post news and commentary of interest to particular communities, including the fairy-tale community. One of the major blogs for this purpose is Gypsy Thornton’s fairy-tale news blog, *Once Upon a Blog*, established in April of 2009. Describing herself as “the Fairy Tale News Hound,” Thornton seeks to find and post about “all forms of fairy tale news and events” (Thornton 2009). Recent posts (as of June 2017) have included news about Christophe Gans’ *La Belle et la Bête* coming to Netflix, information about the Australian Fairy Tale Society’s upcoming 2017 conference, and an article detailing the horrific story of a doctor drugging women and raping them as part of a “Sleeping Beauty” fetish (Thornton 2009). This collection of topics reflects the wide scope of the blog well. Thornton is not an absent figure from site, but she remains primarily in the background, and her posts are not usually personal in nature.

That said, the expansion of the blog format into what can primarily be referred to as news-posting websites does not mean that the personal blog format has disappeared. Indeed, millions of Internet users continue to post at personal, sometimes called “lifestyle,” blogs. A small number of this style of blog can be said to address those interested in fairy tales in particular. A good example is Katherine Langrish’s *Seven Miles of Steel Thistles* (2009). Langrish, primarily the author of several children’s and young adult novels, began her blog in November of 2009 as a way of engaging with and “indulg[ing her] love of fairytales, folklore, fantasy, myths, legends, and children’s literature” (Langrish 2009). Langrish’s blog has a distinct air of the personal to it – she writes about her own reactions to tales, posts poetry she has written, and zeros in on particular things about folklore that she finds fascinating (Langrish 2009). Indeed, her personal reflections have proven so popular that she has

recently released a printed book of her essays on these subjects, many of which began life as blog posts. The book, also called *Seven Miles of Steel Thistles: Reflections on Fairy Tales*, was published in 2016 (Langrish 2016).

Taking the fairy-tale blog to an entirely different space is Taisia Kitaiskaia's "Ask Baba Yaga," a humorous advice column that is part of the website *The Hairpin*, a "general-interest site aimed at women" (Zimmerman 2010). In Kitaiskaia's column-blog, she writes as (or "channels," as is argued in her 2017 interview with the website *Jezebel*) Baba Yaga, the infamous witch of Russian fairy tales (Kitaiskaia 2017b). These responses are often funny but poignant, poetic but no-nonsense. For example, in response to the question "How do I know when to focus, and when to let my heart guide me?" Baba Yaga responds:

Yr heart is a bloody organ without eyes, limbs, or smell. All it knows is heaviness & lightness, the movement of liquid, & its own music. Yr heart will know when you are moving too quickly or slowly, when you are carrying a great weight, and when yr body is an ugly song.; Know what yr heart is, and do not ask of it what it cannot do.

(Kitaiskaia 2015)

To Kitaiskaia, writing an advice column as Baba Yaga is not a parody – it allows her to access the "irresistible" figure of the witch and truly help people via "natural imagery, pointing out cause and effect and exposing the situation for what it really is" (Kitaiskaia 2017b). This long-running Internet column has also recently been published in print, with new and previously posted content, as *Ask Baba Yaga: Otherworldly Advice for Everyday Troubles* (Kitaiskaia 2017a).

FAIRY TALES AND WEBCOMICS

Webcomics – comics that "are made first for the web, made by an independent creator, who may be working with others, but who all have no originary print version and no corporate sponsorship" (Fenty, Houp, and Taylor 2004) – are nearly as old as the Internet, only growing in number and popularity over the years (Garrity 2011). While it is generally agreed that "digital technology offers new avenues of aesthetic experimentation for comic artists," and that the Internet can provide audiences that creators might not otherwise find (Fenty, Houp, and Taylor 2004), some, such as noted comic scholar Scott McCloud, would go further, stating that the Internet grants artists "the design opportunities of an infinite canvas" and a place where moving from "selling ten comics to selling ten thousand comics to selling ten million comics is as smooth as ice" (McCloud 2000: 188, 222). While McCloud's somewhat hyperbolic statements have been rebuked to various degrees in diverse media (see Groth 2001 and Fenty, Houp, and Taylor 2004), Shaenon Garrity, writing for *The Comics Journal*, argues that he was "right in all the ways that counted" and that it was his work that "ushered in a flowering of webcomics experimentation" (2011). Esteemed fairy-tale webcomics from the past two decades include Irma "Aimo" Ahmed and Allison Pang's epic *Fox and Willow* (2012), Emily Carroll's horror-inspired stories (2010), and Andrea L. Peterson's heavily intertextual fairy-tale mashup *No Rest for the Wicked*, which features a princess protagonist with an allergy to peas, a huntress

Little Red Riding Hood, and a “Puss in Boots”-inspired part-cat, part-human character named Perrault (2003).

Indeed, webcomics have continued to flourish, increasingly becoming especially lauded for their willingness to engage with and represent diversity. One clear explanation for this is the fact that, while creators may depend on their specific audiences, they do not depend on any traditional publisher. Samantha Close believes that “[t]he intensity of interaction between audiences and creators is a central aspect of the webcomics genre” (2015: 535). Most successful and lasting “webcomics function as small businesses run by their creators,” with readers providing support in a variety of ways, including “donations,” “subscription fees,” and “buying merchandise.” According to Close, this gives creators the potential to be “financially independent,” un beholden to anyone who may limit their vision, a fact that opens up possibilities for more diverse representation (536). Simply put, distribution on the Internet offers “the freedom to release comics that the mainstream industry and audience would reject” (Fenty, Houpp, and Taylor 2004). As Amy Carlson suggested in her recent presentation on fairy-tale webcomic artist Maya Kern at the Thinking with Stories fairy-tale studies conference in Detroit in August 2017, the Internet is a place where subversive fairy-tale retellings can thrive, and webcomics are at the forefront of exciting adaptation (Carlson 2017).

Popular webcomic creator Sfé R. Monster’s recent work, *Eth’s Skin*, is an exceptional example of a fairy-tale webcomic that demonstrates this diversity of representation (2014a). Monster, a Canadian artist who identifies as queer and genderqueer, uses the structure and characters of the fairy tale to create a beautiful, magical version of British Columbia in which fantastic creatures like mermaids and selkies are very real. It is, to quote Monster, “a world rife with magic and old-growth forests, full of barnacle-punk mermaids, moss witches, low tides, kelp forests, and restless sea spirits” (2014b). Eth, the protagonist of the story, is genderqueer, though it is never explicitly discussed nor indeed treated as anything that needs special discussion. “[G]ender nonbinary characters and [characters in] relationships outside of the heteronormative” also appear and are presented as “perfectly ordinary” (Davis 2014). Monster states:

I used to worry I was limiting myself or making the wrong choice by choosing to create and tell only queer-focused stories, but it turns out there is an awesome audience hungry for unquestionably queer content, who are incredibly supportive of the work I create.

(2014b)

Eth’s Skin demonstrates the profound power webcomics have in their ability to present as normative what mainstream media would likely reject as controversial.

FAIRY TALES AND ONLINE VIDEO

Online videos – accessible primarily through websites such as *YouTube* – are another part of the complex fairy-tale Internet. In using the term “online video,” I refer to born-digital videos made exclusively for distribution and engagement on the Internet. These videos are usually free to access, short, and often employ similar “audiovisual

aesthetics” to the music video format (Vernallis 2013: 6–10). As technology becomes easier to use, the limits on who can make, remake, consume, and comment upon video have largely disappeared. While the makers of online videos may not have the budget that movie studios have, their creativity and determination to spread their messages, combined with the popularity of the websites that host their content, ensures that their work has the potential to be seen regardless. Online video has become “a force to be reckoned with in contemporary popular culture” (Burgess and Green 2009: vii).

Many of the fairy-tale videos that are posted online are parody videos. As Vernallis argues:

[p]arody and the sardonic response occur partly because technology makes it possible; adding a second layer that circumvents, undercuts, or makes ridiculous the original object is one of the easiest things to do. In the anonymity of the web, YouTube makers are in search of a ground – your sarcastic take immediately places you in relation to a select group of viewers as well as producers and fans of the original material. Your parody, now tied to original content, piggybacks on an already accrued attention.

(2013: 146)

Because fairy tales are so well known, so full of easily recognizable motifs, and so beloved, they are particularly easy marks for parody. While many of these videos are sarcastic in nature (see, for example, The Second City’s series “Advice from a Cartoon Princess” or the shocking “If Disney Cartoons Were Historically Accurate” (2013) video produced by the humor website *Cracked*), I would like to focus here on the amusing but endearing, and even activist, videos of performer Todrick Hall.

Hall enjoyed a brief period of traditional fame following his appearance on the ninth season of the reality television show *American Idol* (Nelson 2016), but his popularity truly soared when he began making online videos, many of them fairy-tale parodies explicitly calling on the Disney versions of the tales, and posting them to *YouTube*. Each of these videos subverts their fairy-tale material, but in a way that betrays Hall’s own appreciation and even love for them. His “Disney Dudez,” for example, features several fairy-tale princes dealing with the aftermath of their corresponding princesses breaking up with them. In this video, Hall appears as a helpful guide who, via song, aids them in remembering who they are, reminding them that they don’t necessarily need any princesses to make them happy, and that they can, in fact, form a boy band instead (Hall 2013). The video is upbeat, with a positive message, but still manages to question the heteronormative romance so central to Disney fairy tales in particular.

Hall credits online videos with giving him the opportunity, free from ties to anyone, to express himself as exactly the person he wants to be: “I just love the fact that YouTube is a place where you can take the risk yourself ... I gave myself my own chance” (Nelson 2016). Hall uses the platform he has built, as a maker of exceptionally popular online material, to explicitly advance progressive ideals. His “Cinderella” video, posted in 2014, was made in support of gay marriage and features Hall in the role of Cinderella. With the aid of numerous notable queer public figures, Hall’s “Cinderella” reaches the ball and finds his happy ever after with his prince (Hall 2014). While he is far from the only one engaging with fairy

tales in this way via online video, I submit, as I have argued elsewhere (see Warman 2018), that Hall's works are particularly excellent examples of what Cristina Bacchilega refers to as "activist adaptations," reworkings of fairy tales that are explicitly meant to put forward "a politicized challenge to the hegemonic tropes of the genre" (2013: 70).

While parody videos are by far the most popular way to engage with the fairy tale via online video, one can easily find a variety of straight retellings, "vids" (copyrighted material re-edited and set to a popular song), and even recorded storytelling sessions as well. While their legality is hotly debated, vids are a particularly intriguing and still understudied aspect of participatory culture, as they often function as critical engagement with their source texts. As Julie Levin Russo argues, they have the ability to "celebrate, critique, and de- or reconstruct" their sources (Russo 2009: 126). They are relatively easy to learn to make, and the "digitization of mass media" has made the material with which to do so readily available (125). Commercial fairy-tale films and television shows have produced countless vids, many of which constitute retellings of their own. Consider, for example, the numerous "Swan Queen" vids promoting the perceived potential for a romantic relationship between two of the female stars of the television show *Once Upon a Time* (2011-). While there is little to suggest the mainstream television program will ever move in this direction, particularly considering the recent departure from the show of one of the characters in question, the relationship has long had many vocal proponents (Hay and Baxter 2014: 329). The vids some of these enthusiasts produce offer what they see as compelling evidence, taken directly from the show itself, that such a relationship is not only feasible but also logical. In many ways, these videos – or at least the most successful – function similarly to critical essays making an argument.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Scholars have written about digital media and culture in the context of "a new and challenging subject matter from a variety of academic disciplines" for over two decades now (Liestøl, Morrison, and Rasmussen 2003: 1). That said, we are still only beginning to explore the ways in which "digital media are not only objects of analysis, but also instruments for the development of innovative perspectives on both media and culture" (2). Though I have limited my discussion here, there are many additional areas of the Internet, and digital culture more broadly, that deserve consideration as crucial parts of the fairy-tale world. More are being formed all the time. While there is perhaps no real way to tell how far participatory digital culture will be able to take the fairy tale in the future, multimodal digital composing seems a particularly fruitful place to look next, as it has the potential to allow for the exploration of different ways to experience fairy-tale texts via the screen. Early examples of the possibilities include Donna Leishman's interactive digital fairy tales (2001) and Robert Scholes' authorized hypertext version of Robert Coover's 1996 fairy-tale novel *Briar Rose* (2002). To quote Bacchilega:

[n]ew-media and multimedial artistic and intellectual projects ... respond to a twenty-first-century understanding of the [fairy-tale] genre and have the *potential* – partly because of their built-in interactivity and discussion – for further

transforming the ... public's experience not only of fairy tales on the Internet but also of fairy tales more generally, their significance in narrative and social life.

(2013: 14)

While I have focused here on the positive developments of our still-new participatory digital culture, there are, of course, negatives to consider as well. An increasingly salient criticism of participatory culture online is the fact that, in giving voice to everyone, the voices that may know more about particular topics are drowned out in favor of the voices that are loudest. Fairy-tale scholarship is not immune to this phenomenon. Scholars should not (and simply cannot) police everything posted online, but that means that misinformation is easily spread. While the situation is not as dire as Andrew Keen would have it in his controversial book *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet is Killing Our Culture* (2007), widespread education regarding the evaluation of sources is absolutely needed more and more in today's society, as is accessible quality scholarship. Participatory culture is pervasive, but scholars can and must learn to work with it as opposed to against it.

The negative effects of our increasingly globalized and commodified digital world should not be underestimated either – to cite just one example,

electronic culture ... enhances a type of space-time compression that is grounded in and reinforces social inequality on a global scale: “we can be everywhere faster and faster” is the fantasy that supports our sense of reality if we have access to the technology.

(Bacchilega 2013: 15)

It is no accident that this essay appears in the section of this book on The Americas – the US continues to dominate in this area and this domination must not go unacknowledged or unchallenged if we are to realize the promise of the combination of fairy tales and digital culture and take advantage of all it offers and could offer moving forward.

The Internet has, from its earliest days, provided space for enthusiastic consumers to become something more. All of the independent producers mentioned in this essay were once, simply, fairy-tale fans, and, as Jenkins puts it, “cyberspace is fandom writ large” (2006b: 138). The Internet allows for personal and creative responses to be shared broadly, permitting those formally only granted the title of fan to ascend to the level of those who shape the conversation. There are, of course, benefits and costs to this new landscape. Blogs, webcomics, and online video are just three of the multiple ways one can interact with and even become part of the fairy-tale world via digital culture.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

FAIRY TALE, FAN FICTION, AND POPULAR MEDIA

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Anne Kustritz

Fan fiction and fairy tales can become enmeshed both at the level of content and practice (Kustritz 2018a; Kustritz 2018b). The term fan fiction describes original stories written and distributed in communities of amateurs, which draw upon elements of preexisting stories, public figures, and/or events. Originally most closely associated with the birth of organized *Star Trek* fandom and circulated in print format alongside other forms of fan creativity like drawings and crafts, in the digital era fan fiction and other fan works are primarily circulated online (Verba 2003; Coppa 2006). In terms of content, like an enormous amount of modern cultural expression, a large portion of fan fiction borrows from, and draws upon, fairy tale themes, characters, and tropes. These include direct fan revisions of oral, literary, and mediated fairy tales, as well as the use of fairy-tale settings, plots, and frameworks fused with other characters and situations. In terms of practice, fan fiction replicates several characteristics of the pre-industrial storytelling communities where many fairy tales originated, including collective authorship, the retelling of multiple versions, a complex or antagonistic relationship to the formal economy, and multi- and trans-media adaptation and expansion. Thus, fan fiction provides a space wherein non-professionals may add to what Cristina Bacchilega calls the “fairy-tale web” (2013), or the vast network of fairy tale representations in many media forms throughout history. These amateur stories may incorporate content beyond the norms and expectations of the media industry and the art world. As such, by returning fairy tales to the pre-copyright practice of communal authorship, fan fiction allows for public interrogation of the fairy-tale legacy, and provides opportunities for non-professionals to examine and produce common culture. As a result of these congruities, both fairy-tale studies and fan studies have a great deal to gain from mutual engagement.

THE ANATOMY OF AMATEUR TRANSMEDIA TALES: STUDYING CONTENT

Fan fiction’s content varies enormously, but like any aspects of modern culture, it frequently returns to themes, archetypes, motifs, and plots derived from the fairy-tale legacy. As a result, fan fiction shares structural similarities with the fairy tale in terms

of practice, but not necessarily in terms of content, at least not in any systematic manner. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that content analyses of fan fiction can offer useful connections to fairy-tale studies in certain circumstances. These include direct fan revisions of oral, literary, and mediated fairy tales, as well as the use of fairy-tale settings, plots, and frameworks fused with other characters and situations. In other words, there can be fan fiction about fairy tales, and fan fiction about other kinds of stories that nevertheless draw upon fairy tales as an intertext in the process of rewriting.

As a result, scholars such as Cat Tosenberger have explored the productive intersections between fan fiction and fairy tale or folklore-inspired media properties (2010). In her analysis of fan fiction inspired by the Grimm-influenced TV show *Supernatural* (2005–), she argues that fan rewrites can help to trace the changing cultural value of fairy tales in modern media and culture. In particular, because the fairy tale is often gendered female while *Supernatural*'s other key genre influence, horror, is often gendered male, she explains that fan interpretations play out these social and narrative tensions, sometimes using tropes of the fairy tale to assert a female-gendered reading position (Felschow 2010; Tosenberger 2010). Likewise, studies of *Once Upon a Time* (2011–) fan fiction can help to illuminate how fairy tales evolve in the modern transmedia ecology through networks of both corporate and amateur authors. As a result, scholars including Victoria Gonzalez and Sandra Strauch have explored how fan authors and corporate authors approach lesbian fairy-tale themes differently in the same stories (Gonzalez 2016; Strauch 2017), while Rukmini Pande and Swati Moitra examine the unique inflections that fan and corporate authors provide for the intersection of race and sexuality in depictions of Cinderella's Evil Queen (Pande and Moitra 2017).

At the other end of the spectrum, scholars may also investigate how fans introduce elements of the fairy tale in their process of rewriting sources wherein these themes were otherwise absent. In fan fiction, these works are often called “fusion” stories or “alternate universe” (“AU”) stories, terms that designate stories in which the elements of two different storyworlds intermingle. Thus, Cinderella may find herself unravelling a string of bloody gangland murders as a hard-boiled detective, or, conversely, Spock may be saved from eternal slumber in the Vulcan Science Academy fortress by the dashing young Captain Kirk of the Federation Starship Enterprise. The latter example illustrates the introduction by fans of fairy-tale elements into a universe where they did not previously exist in order to tell a story very different from the normal functioning of that storyworld's genre forms and rules. By investigating the content of fairy-tale fusion and AU stories, scholars can examine very unique reformulations of traditional tales, and investigate the structural functions of fairy-tale elements in unusual situations. For example, in my own work I have looked at how aspects of the fairy tale often critiqued as sexist, like the stasis of the fairy tale “happily-ever-after” ending, can serve completely different political purposes in fairy tale fusion and AU stories (Kustritz 2016; Kustritz 2018a; Kustritz 2018b). While this trope may imply that heterosexual marriage is the ultimate form of fulfillment for girls and women, because it functions as the literal ending of women's stories in many tales, this same sense of stability and closure can also shore up the cultural value of a couple when the partners are non-normative, for instance in the case of a female-dominant relationship or a same-sex couple. Situating their love as the natural and satisfying outcome of a tale and sanctifying it with a happily-ever-after

undermines the privileging of heterosexual, patriarchal family structures as hegemonic, and utilizes the pleasures of narrative closure for a politically disruptive purpose. Thus, examining the content of stories that use fairy-tale tropes in storyworlds where these would not ordinarily appear allows scholars and fan authors to examine and reconsider the limits of genres and the function of fairy-tale tropes and elements, while study of the content of fan fiction about fairy tales enables consideration of how fairy-tale plots and themes proliferate through modern amateur and corporate transmedia narration.

STORYTELLING CULTURES: STUDYING PRACTICES

In addition to studying stories' content, reflecting on fans and fairy tales together can open a unique window into a shared set of storytelling practices and their cultural context. While some fairy tales derive primarily from the literary tradition, many such stories owe a significant debt to a long history of oral storytelling and folk culture. Under these conditions of production and circulation, a number of possibilities arise that later developments in the media industry, social norms, and intellectual property law make difficult and culturally unintelligible, namely collective authorship, the retelling of multiple versions in multiple media, and alternate economic models for cultural creativity, including a non-profit or gift economy. However, as argued by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (2006), modern digital culture may reverse these trends, encouraging the industry to pursue and incorporate audience participation, and seizing the opportunities inherent to new media to construct sprawling transmedia narratives that split storyworlds into multiple media extensions. On the one hand, these shifts make fairy tales a particularly resonant social space for tracing cultural transformations in storytelling, as they span all three eras; fairy tales can originate in oral folk cultures and undergo reinterpretation by numerous authors and artists throughout history in many media forms, yet then become (partly) domesticated by corporations during the rise of the modern media industry and copyright law, until finally returning to the popular tradition of expansion through user generated content and corporate transmedia storytelling in contemporary media environments. On the other hand, Jenkins also advocates for thinking about fan cultures as the inheritors of what he calls the "grassroots creativity" that marks folk cultures (Jenkins 2012: xxx–xxxi). He explains that at the same time as mass culture began to displace folk culture and push it to the margins, new creative fan cultures emerged in response, taking up many of the same activities from song to stories to arts and crafts, but now in relation to mass media content or suturing the cultural space between folk and mass culture (Jenkins 2006: 132–7). This continuity in practice between folk culture and fan culture is most apparent in Jenkins' work on filk, or fan folk singing, but it has also been noted by other scholars, including Mark Soderstrom (Jenkins 2012: 250–76). As a result, fan fiction and fairy tales can bear striking resemblances in terms of practice.

Both folk culture and fan culture maintain a fraught relationship to the market, and in a certain sense define themselves against industrial production of storytelling, despite fan cultures' intimate imbrication within popular culture. Yet, these continuities can remain invisible due to fairy tales' and fan fiction's differing placement within cultural hierarchies of taste. Due to shifting scales of cultural value, the market

often devalues amateur works as poorer quality than professional publication, as in the lament against mediocrity found in the bestselling *The Cult of the Amateur*, while at the same time delegitimizing works tainted by the market as inauthentic (Keen 2007). This matrix of cultural production fetishizes indigenous and folk cultures as what ethnologist James Clifford called “pure products,” or records of prehistory shielded from modernity, and elevates the supposedly “priceless” realm of professional high art and literature (Berger 1972; Clifford 1988: 1–18). These structures of value are saturated by what critical ethnologists like Clifford (1988) and Eric Michaels (1994) critique as Eurocentric models of cultural development, and what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) described as taste cultures that privilege the preferences of the upper classes. As a result, folk creativity is relegated to a salvage mentality, or what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls “eleventh hour” folkloristics (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Tosenberger 2010); yet fan fiction, as a child of the market unredeemed by either profits or professionalism, becomes doubly damned. Thus, fan fiction is neither high culture, nor pure authenticity, nor even saleable, and thus falls between hegemonic forms of cultural value.

However, the constructed and internally contradictory nature of these categories becomes apparent when considering why fairy tales are not simply called fan fiction, nor why fan fiction is rarely called literature, like some literary fairy tales. As in the above introduction, at its most basic level, fan fiction describes stories that draw upon preexisting elements. Yet, this hardly describes a truly unique or unprecedented practice. High art and literature often incorporate call-and-response structures, from Shakespeare’s reliance on Plutarch and Ovid (Ayres 1910; Honigsmann 1959), to critical rewrites such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys (1966), and the rich history of feminist fairy tale reworkings like Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* (Duncker 1984; Bacchilega 2010; Carter 2012). The oral storytelling cultures of the pre-industrial era were also iterative, retelling multiple versions of the same stories across time and space to suit local needs and preferences. As Henry Jenkins argues, contradicting the notion of “pure products,” during the nineteenth century this practice even included a great deal of cross-pollination with mass media as “commercial culture raided folk culture and folk culture raided commercial culture” (Jenkins 2006: 135). Why, then, should a special word become necessary to describe fan fiction? Jenkins argues this is due to an era of contraction, when mass media outpaced folk culture in reach and popularity during the twentieth century and the boundaries of stories became policed by copyright (Jenkins 2006: 137). As Jenkins notes, his term ‘participatory culture’ “only really makes sense as a description where there is a strong pull toward spectatorship and consumption rather than a general assumption of widespread participation” (Jenkins 2012: xxvii). In other words, ‘participatory culture’ would be meaningless before the twentieth century because participation was normative, just as the term fan fiction only becomes needed as a distinct category when copyright freezes folk culture in the past and creates sharp distinctions in the law between legitimate professional author-owners and illegitimate amateur creativity. Again, the divide becomes particularly sharp for fairy tales because their history demonstrates the impact of these transformations. Noted legal scholar Lawrence Lessig famously summed up the importance of fairy tales for this narrative about large-scale changes in the international laws and norms governing storytelling when he wrote that copyright lobbyists successfully promoted revisions to copyright so that now, “no one can

do to the Disney Corporation what Walt Disney did to the Brothers Grimm” (Lessig 2002; Jenkins 2003). In other words, copyright and systems of cultural value are the means by which folk storytelling, or potentially publishable reinterpretations, rhetorically and legally turn into fan fiction.

Yet, the divisions of the twentieth-century mass media era become increasingly blurred within the convergence culture fostered by widespread access to powerful web distribution platforms and changing media industry strategies. Within convergence culture fairy tales become even hotter intellectual properties, and the industry increasingly invites fans to produce their own “user generated content” (Jenkins 2006; Ryan 2013). However, the terminology is revealing, as in industry logic fans are not called authors or artists but “users,” and their work is simply generic “content,” not unique expression. As noted by critics of digital participatory cultures like Jose van Dijck (Van Dijck and Nieborg 2009), Mark Andrejevic (2009), and Tiziana Terranova (2000), fan work often becomes a form of unpaid neoliberal labor that increases value for internet platforms while exploiting fans. The terms of this participation also often remain limited, as fans are increasingly invited into what Eggo Müller calls “formatted spaces of participation” (2009), where media corporations dictate the allowable forms on interaction. These dynamics create new divisions between fan works created in corporate spaces, and those that circulate in fan constructed web infrastructure. Thus, Henry Jenkins documents the gendered limitations of George Lucas’s fan video competition (2003), Julie Levin Russo explains how little source material producers of *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009) made available for their remix video contest (2009), and Karen Hellekson (2009), Alexis Lothian (2013), and Abigail De Kosnik (2009), all discuss the differences in autonomy and profit between FanLib, a for-profit fan fiction archive purchased by Disney, and non-profit, fan fiction constructed repositories such as the Archive of Our Own. These scholars note that all of these industry-owned scripted spaces included the provision that anything fans contribute immediately becomes the sole property of the corporation, requiring that fans trade ownership, independence, and recognition for inclusion. This condition ironically cuts both ways because while it seizes community work for private profits, it also tacitly acknowledges that the legal consensus on amateur adaptations have shifted. In a post-*Fifty Shades of Grey* world when a piece of fan fiction can become one of the top grossing novels of all time, the legal arguments that prevented expansion and commentary have begun to admit certain exceptions (Jamar and Glenn 2014). As such, by asking fan writers to give up their rights, the terms of service for corporate participation spaces tacitly admit that fan fiction is not infringement but rather the fan writer’s property. Thus, terms of service must now acknowledge fan adapters as potential owners, even if they also strip them of this right in the same breath.

Such provisions and the massive success of corporate fairy-tale storyworlds such as *Once Upon a Time* suggest the limits of a purely celebratory narrative about the reemergence of folk culture within modern participatory culture (Horowitz and Kitsis 2011). As Jenkins writes,

[t]he story of American arts in the twenty-first century might be told in terms of the public reemergence of grassroots creativity as everyday people take advantage

of new technologies that enable them to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content.

(2006: 136)

Yet, this reemergence cannot simply replicate the pre-industrial system. Instead of a return to a “pure” position of egalitarian communal storytelling, both the past and the modern situation require further nuance to capture the complex interweaving of commercial and alternative economies, as well as race, gender, and taste hierarchies. Both fairy tales and fan fiction offer valuable insights into this tangle, and picking apart the contradictions where they intersect can clarify the social, legal, and economic structures which shape storytelling practices that underlie fairy tale narratives. Therefore, it makes sense to use the separate terms oral fairy tale folk tradition, literary fairy-tale tradition, mass mediated fairy tales, professional fairy tale revisions, and fan fiction fairy tale revisions, because each of these marks a unique space of production and culture of circulation. At this juncture, Bacchilega’s concept of the “fairy-tale web” becomes especially useful, since, despite the particularities of their location and circumstances, the fairy-tale web serves as a reminder that they all simultaneously remain interrelated within a larger transnational discourse (2013). As Bacchilega explains, the fairy-tale web is a conceptual framework for understanding the dense network of retellings and media forms through which fairy tales replicate and circulate across time and space. Fan fiction maintains a place in the fairy-tale web both because fan writers rework fairy tale material, as discussed previously, but also because they renegotiate the social space of amateur, communal storytelling practice.

The meaning of communal authorship in each case may serve as one last concrete example of the continuities and tensions between fairy tale and fan fiction storytelling practices. Even in the case of fairy tales with known individual authors, the proliferation of fairy tales across cultures and media forms relies on a certain promiscuousness and benefits from the stories’ entrance into the public domain before the expansion of modern copyright. By its very premise fan fiction also disrupts authorial control and promotes the legitimacy of story extensions created by anyone from the community. As a result, both fairy tales and fan fiction grow through communal retelling, treating stories as, in a certain sense, community rather than personal property. Yet, this is only part of the story. Even if Roland Barthes correctly foretold the eclipse of authors’ cultural authority over the meaning of their texts, that does not necessarily mean, as Michel Foucault argues, that the author-function will disappear, or that some other system for organizing, limiting, and shaping the flow of discourses will emerge (Barthes 1977; Foucault 1998). Thus, Maria Leavenworth notes the irony that although transmedia structures undermine the vision of the original author as the organizing principle of a narrative world, this does not necessarily lead to increased openness to legitimizing amateur contributions, because the corporation itself immediately steps in as the proxy-author (2011). To exemplify this, she recounts the strange circumstances that led to L.J. Smith, original author of *The Vampire Diaries*, being fired from her own book series by Alloy Entertainment and having to post her later novels as fan fiction. As a result, the lack of a singular author as a strict organizing principle does not necessarily mean free, unconstrained proliferation.

Therefore, although both fairy tales and fan fiction engage in communal storytelling practices, each also maintains boundaries and organizing principles for

governing that communal system. According to scholars including Diarmuid Ó Giolláin (2011), Amy Shuman (2006; 2010), and Wendy Welch (2008), in folk and oral storytelling traditions these often cluster around cultural authority, personal experience, social role, and ritual or spiritual purposes. Thus, according to Welch, even stories not attached to a specific author may not be permitted to circulate outside the framework of particular events, or a particular group or class of people. Similarly, Cat Tosenberger (2010), among others, has discussed the manner in which gendered associations between fairy tales, women, and girls, also restricts and channels their cultural circulation and conditions of their reinterpretation. The rich history of critical feminist reinterpretations of fairy tales partly results from these cultural assumptions, as the fairy tale appears to hold special significance for constructing ideas about women's roles (Lieberman 1972; Duncker 1984; Zipes 1986; Bacchilega 2010). Further, it is also worth reiterating that, although Bacchilega argues that no version of a tale can maintain absolute authority due to a long history of retelling by professionals and amateurs (2013), some versions do exert a standardizing influence on a larger cultural field. Most notably, as thoroughly examined by many scholars, the Brothers Grimm and Disney became central, authoritative versions that flattened out a great deal of diversity and marked some tales not as equal but as "nonstandard" or "alternative" (Tosenberger 2010). Therefore, while the history of fairy tales is communal in the sense that even stories first written by a single author now contain traces of interconnection with numerous retellings, they are not all equally open.

Meanwhile, although its boundaries are permeable, fan fiction stories that descend from organized fan infrastructure for literary science fiction and *Star Trek* are communal in the sense that they circulate within a community in tandem with numerous alternative versions and retellings (Verba 2003; Coppa 2006). However, fan fiction proliferation is also constrained by pseudonyms and a culture of permission. According to my own ethnographic work (Kustritz 2015b) and the fan histories documented by Francesca Coppa (2006), Camille Bacon Smith (1992), Jenkins (2012), and Joan Marie Verba (2003), fan fiction is primarily not authorless, but instead published under pseudonyms to protect the authors' identities. However, as Foucault speculated, the pseudonym easily takes on the author-function (1998). As a result, fan fiction communities are often wracked by plagiarism scandals, a form of social outrage that would make no sense in a truly communitarian setting with no concept of story as property or authorship as authority (Fiesler 2008; Dunlap and Wolf 2010; Busse and Farley 2013). Yet, this may still seem nonsensical: on what grounds do writers organized through the practice of using other people's stories make claims of plagiarism against those who would use their stories? The answer lies in both the function of the pseudonym and the culture of permission. First, the purpose of the pseudonym is social; it consolidates a certain self-presentation and reputation within the in-group where the pseudonym is known. Plagiarism, in this context, is a form of theft like copyright infringement, but on a different level. Because fan fiction is published at-cost in print fan magazines or 'zines, or for free online, plagiarists cannot steal money from a fan author. What they can steal is praise. Legal scholar Rebecca Tushnet explains the distinction in an article speculating about alternate forms of intellectual property licensing that might be useful for digital creative expression like fan fiction (2007). She argues that the most important form of compensation in fan communities is not payment in money, but payment in credit. This

is why plagiarism can still function as a loss in fan communities and why fan essayist Rachael Sabotini (1999) and scholars including Tisha Turk (2014) argue that fan communities function as a “gift economy” (Mauss 1967: 6–16): the larger the gift a fan gives, in the form of fan creative works or administrative service, the more they receive in social capital and reputation, as consolidated through their pseudonym.

The second part of the puzzle is the culture of permission. Several scholars have noted, and my own ethnographic work agrees (Kustritz 2015b), that fan fiction communities make a sharp distinction between reworking material published through the mass media or otherwise in the public domain, versus creating transformative versions of other fans’ works. This is especially the case for critical works, as fan norms of politeness sometimes overtly forbid and at other times strictly channel negative feedback or commentary about other fans. This connects to the debate between amateur and professional aesthetics identified by scholars including Constance Penley (1991) and Sheena Pugh (2005; Smith 1992). While Rhiannon Bury writes that some specialized sub-communities develop a strictly bourgeois ethos of literary references, grammar checks, and quality control (2005), other parts of the community emphasize the importance of openness and inclusivity, which requires a low bar for entry and the maintenance of space for strictly amateurish and experimental works. As a result, negative feedback, critical commentary, and critical fictional rewrites or expansions of other fan stories are sometimes policed in fan creative communities. In addition to negativity, the fan fiction culture of politeness, for a long time normalized the practice of asking for permission to use elements of a fellow fan’s work, or to display or distribute that work. To a certain degree this norm has shifted over the course of fan fiction’s transition onto the internet, as some modern fan communities compile “blanket permission” lists of fan authors, artists, and video editors who do not want to be asked if other fans wish to rewrite, remix, repost, or display their work. However, the very existence of these lists reveals the norm they may slowly displace. The sharp us/them division inherent to this permission culture rests upon the assumption that professionals exist in the realm of money and legality, while fans function in the realm of community norms and credit. As the logic goes, when a professional is asked for permission to adapt their story, their lawyer responds with the monetary terms upon which the intellectual property may be licensed. Because this market logic locks out amateurs, fans feel free to usurp this system and grant themselves permission to repurpose professional works. However, because fans are all equally non-professionals within the same community of practice, where the gift economy runs on praise, fans may easily contact each other, and routinely give each other permission to rewrite their works, because this also increases their social capital. Not asking and not giving credit undermine the communicative networks and social reciprocity that govern fan exchange – although such norms are constantly in flux (Coppa 2006; Kustritz 2015a). Thus, both fan fiction and fairy tales derive from cultures that police authorship and storytelling on alternate terms from the formal economy.

CONCLUSION: FAIRY-TALE LEGACIES, FAN RETELLINGS

In sum, considering fan fiction and fairy tales in conjunction can benefit scholars of both fields. In terms of content, fan fiction reinterpretations and adaptations of fairy tales expand consideration of how the tales may be retold in the modern transmedia

environment. In terms of practice, fan fiction and fairy tales descend from similar cultural formations that pre-date modern copyright and intellectual property. As such, they both maintain a complex relationship to the categories of folk culture and corporate storytelling cultures. Fan fiction is one site in modern culture where stories are still produced under conditions of communal authorship and wherein stories may proliferate in an iterative process that results in multiple versions. Consequently, fan fiction is a fertile site for producing a deeper understanding of modern fairy-tale cultures and tales.

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PART IV

ASIA AND AUSTRALASIA





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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

FAIRY-TALE WORLDS OF SOUTH ASIA



Sadhana Naithani

Folk narratives or folktales are distinguished by their use of wonder and magic as the most important tools of storytelling, but the term “fairy tale” refers to a particular form of wonder/magic that has been most prevalent in the West Asian and European folktale. The term “fairy tale” therefore signifies what can be called “wonder tales” or “tales of magic” in general. While the latter two terms are absolutely appropriate for folktales of South Asia, the term fairy tale is somewhat problematic as it limits our wider understanding of tales of wonder and magic. However, one cannot say that fairies just do not exist in the South Asian narratives; they do, and especially in northern India and Pakistan their presence is noteworthy.

South Asia comprises of the nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. This region has also been referred to as the sub-continent of India. The cultural inter-connections across the region have long histories. It is important not to view these inter-connections with reference to national identities because that can distort the perspective on long histories. For instance, it is incorrect to say that the influence of “Indian” culture can be seen on all other folk narratives, as most of the observers are prone to say, because when these folk narratives emerged there were no national boundaries and their evolution took place all over the continent. The cultural connections between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in modern history were also contained within a single national boundary until 1947. These regions from the west to the east of the sub-continent reflect a very strong influence of Arabic and Persian linguistic heritage, and also of the Islamic heritage (Khan 1987; Korom 2006: 6). In the north Indian folktales this influence is visible in the form and content of stories (Naithani 2006). This is important for our discussion here, as owing to the influence of West Asian languages and cultures, the presence of fairies (*peri*) in folktales is well known. For example, *peris* feature in this Pashtun tale from the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan: A king with seven sons goes to marry them to the seven daughters of another king. On their journey back after the wedding the youngest prince is fancied by a fairy who transforms him into a flower and takes him away. The princess or his bride searches for him all over, meets the king of fairies and he orders the fairy to transform the prince from the flower to human being and return him to his bride (Ahmad and Boase 2003: 121–6).

And yet, peris do not define the major forms of wonder and magic in South Asian folk narratives; other forms, strategies, devices and symbols occupy far more space in the folk imagination. Therefore “fairy-tale worlds” refers here to *the world of wonders and magic in the folktales of South Asia*. The forms of these are hugely different in different parts of South Asia, but a belief in wonder and magic is prevalent all across it. For example, “[i]n Nepal when people talk about tales, numerous stories which they have heard from their childhood flash to their minds and their imagination carries them away to the land of never-never on the flow of fantastic events and unusual characters” (Sakya and Griffith 1980: 1). The influence of Buddhism and Hinduism is also present in the folktales from Nepal:

Nepal, being strategically situated between Tibet and India, has a population composed of many ethnic groups of Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid strains, who worship the gods of many creeds. This creates a richly diversified culture, profoundly influenced by the different sects of Buddhism and Hinduism.

(Sakya and Griffith 1980: 2–3)

The lines of these inter-connections run very deep in history: for example, Buddhism as the dominant religion in Bhutan and Sri Lanka connects the region from the north to the south since ancient times. In Sri Lanka “[a]fter the introduction of Buddhism monks began to use the folktale in order to illustrate the Buddhist teachings” (Ratnapala 1991: 1).

Three of the biggest religions of the world – Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam – have widespread impact in South Asia. Interestingly, India – the biggest nation, situated in the centre – is the birthplace of Hinduism and Buddhism, and has the majority populace following Hinduism, but also has the second-biggest Muslim community living in any one nation in the world. Amidst the influence of these big religions and their communities, several tribes and their cultures continue to be very much part of the South Asian narrative landscape, although they often struggle to survive and maintain cultural identity.

With multitudes of religious beliefs, social structures, languages in use and physical geographies, homogeneity in culture across South Asia cannot be expected. On the other hand, no observer can miss the cultural inter-connectedness. The different forms of wonder/magic in South Asian folk narratives are also rooted in difference and similarity, which often makes any conception of cultural definition of the region difficult.

South Asian folklore has been collected by international and local collectors since the mid nineteenth century, but this chapter is based on more recent collections. As there is not sufficient research on forms of wonder/magic in the South Asian folk narratives, I propose to reflect on the subject here with reference to two elements: first, some of the forms that are most widely prevalent, and second, some of the forms that are distinctive and unique in themselves. This is certainly not a comprehensive study of all forms of magic and wonder as that would be impossible within the present limitations; the examples discussed here should therefore be taken as representative of the well-known forms of wonder and magic in the South Asian context.

The present discussion of “fairy-tale worlds” of South Asia will be organized according to the following categories: 1) Wonder/magic rooted in religious beliefs;

2) Wonder/magic and nature; 3) Wonder/magic and realism combine in a distinctive narratives series.

WONDER/MAGIC ROOTED IN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

One of the typically South Asian forms of wonder/magic is connected to the belief in rebirth. Hindus and Buddhists believe in rebirth, although the ideal goal is to get out of the circle of life and death (Nirvana). The circle of stories using rebirth as an element of storytelling goes back to the *Jātaka* (birth) stories, or the stories about former births of the Buddha. The framework for this group of stories involves Buddha narrating episodes from his previous lives to his disciples, which were later textualized and became a kind of ethical/moral code of social relations. In these former lives, Buddha has been born as a member of various different species, thus negating the difference between human beings and other beings on this planet. The underlying principle is that the element called *life* is the same in all beings. The former life, however, becomes manifest in some unexplainable relationship in the present. Buddha employs the events of his former births to explain some relationship in the present and to illustrate why it is the way it is. Since Buddhism connects several countries and regions of South Asia, the *Jātaka* tales are their common heritage. They spread along with Buddhism across the region several centuries before Christ. In Sri Lanka “[t]he Jātaka tales were very popular during the Anuradhapura period (437 B.C. to 1017 A.D.) ... The Jātaka tales introduced into the Island by the Buddhist monks began to develop independently in the folk tradition” (Ratnapala 1991: 1–2). As an example, a complete story is presented here:

Vaṭṭaka Jātaka: The Baby Quail (Jat 35)

Once the Master, whilst on an alms-pilgrimage through Magadha, went on his morning round for alms through a certain hamlet in that country; on his return, after his meal, he went out again followed by the company of the Brethren. Just then a great fire broke out. There were numbers of Brethren both in front of the Master and behind him. On came the fire, spreading far and wide, till all was one sheet of smoke and flame.

Hereupon, some unconverted Brethren were seized with the fear of death. “Let us make a counter fire,” they cried; “and then the big fire will not sweep over the ground we have fired.” And, with this view, they set about kindling a fire with their tinder-sticks.

But others said, “What is this you do, Brethren? ... You know not the might of a Buddha! Come, let us go to the Master.” Then, gathering together from front and rear alike, the Brethren in a body flocked round the Lord of Wisdom. At a certain spot the Master halted, with this mighty assembly of the Brethren surrounding him. On rolled the flames, roaring as though to devour them. But when they approached the spot where the Buddha had taken his stand, they came no nearer than sixteen lengths, but there and then went out, even as a torch plunged into water. It had no power to spread over a space thirty-two lengths in diameter.

The Brethren burst into praises of the Master, saying, “Oh! how great are the virtues of a Buddha! For, even this fire, though lacking sense, could not sweep over the spot where a Buddha stood, but went out like a torch in water. Oh! how marvellous are the powers of a Buddha!”

Hearing their words, the Master said, “It is no present power of mine, Brethren, that makes this fire go out on reaching this spot of ground. It is the power of a former ‘Act of Truth’ of mine. For in this spot no fire will burn throughout the whole of this æon, the miracle being one which endures for an æon.”

Then the Elder Ānanda folded a robe into four and spread it for the Master to sit on. The Master took his seat. Bowing to the Buddha as he sat cross-legged there, the Brethren too seated themselves around him. Then they asked him, saying, “Only the present is known to us, sir; the past is hidden from us. Make it known to us.” And, at their request, he told this story of the past.

Once upon a time in this selfsame spot in Magadha, it was as a quail that the Bodhisatta came to life once more ... his parents kept him lying in the nest, while they fed him with food which they brought in their beaks. In himself, he had not the strength either to spread his wings and fly through the air, or to lift his feet and walk upon the ground. Year after year that spot was always ravaged by a jungle-fire; and it was just at this time that the flames swept down on it with a mighty roaring. The flocks of birds, darting from their several nests, were seized with the fear of death, and flew shrieking away. The father and mother of the Bodhisatta were as frightened as the others and flew away, forsaking the Bodhisatta. Lying there in the nest, the Bodhisatta stretched forth his neck, and seeing the flames spreading towards him, he thought to himself, “Had I the power to put forth my wings and fly, I would wing my way hence to safety; or, if I could move my legs and walk, I could escape elsewhere afoot. Moreover, my parents, seized with the fear of death, are fled away to save themselves, leaving me here quite alone in the world. I am without protector or helper. What, then, shall I do this day?”

Then this thought came to him: “In this world there exists what is termed the Efficacy of Goodness, and what is termed the Efficacy of Truth. There are those who, through their having realised the Perfections in past ages, have attained beneath the Bo-tree to be All-Enlightened; who, having won Release by goodness, tranquility and wisdom, possess also discernment of the knowledge of such Release; who are filled with truth, compassion, mercy, and patience; whose love embraces all creatures alike; whom men call omniscient Buddhas. There is an efficacy in the attributes they have won. And I too grasp one truth; I hold and believe in a single principle in Nature. Therefore, it behoves me to call to mind the Buddhas of the past, and the Efficacy they have won, and to lay hold of the true belief that is in me touching the principle of Nature; and by an Act of Truth to make the flames go back, to the saving both of myself and of the rest of the birds.” ...

Accordingly, the Bodhisatta, calling to mind the efficacy of the Buddhas long since passed away, performed an Act of Truth in the name of the true faith that was in him, repeating this stanza:

With wings that fly not, feet that walk not yet,
Forsaken by my parents, here I lie!
Wherefore I conjure thee, dread Lord of Fire,
Primæval Jātaveda, turn! go back!

Even as he performed his Act of Truth, Jātaveda went back a space of sixteen lengths; and in going back the flames did not pass away to the forest devouring

everything in their path. No; they went out there and then, like a torch plunged in water. Therefore it has been said:--

I wrought my Act of Truth, and therewithal
The sheet of blazing fire left sixteen lengths
Unscathed,—like flames by water met and quenched.

...

“Thus, Brethren,” said the Master, “it is not my present power but the efficacy of an Act of Truth performed by me when a young quail, that has made the flames pass over this spot in the jungle.” His lesson ended, he preached the Truths, at the close whereof some won the First, some the Second, some the Third Path, while others again became Arahats. Also, the Master shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying, “My present parents were the parents of those days, and I myself the king of the quails.”

(Cowell 1895: 88–91)

The theme of rebirth establishes inter-connections between the stories and generates narratives that exist on multiple plains. A character is not only what s/he is in the present, but comes from another time and another identity. These two identities are connected in such a manner that the cause of the present actions is rooted in the events of the former existence. This device makes existence itself mysterious, challenging our capacity to judge anyone definitively. Needless to say, this narrative convention is connected to belief in the soul. It is interesting to see that at times it is used as a device for social critique, as for example, in a tale in which the daughter-in-law of a family weeps when a lower caste shoemaker of the village passes away because she has the power to observe the soul that has gone out of the body and can see that it is the soul of a noble person. She does not weep, however, when her father-in-law dies because his soul is that of an evil person. This causes immense problems for her in the story, but the point is that soul is beyond caste and social status.

In the regions of Islamic heritage, wonder and magic exist not as a religious belief, but as part of a storytelling tradition, the archetype of which is the stories of *The Arabian Nights*. In another domain, the Sufi orders in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India thrive on the narration of wondrous and magical stories. All Sufi saints are believed to have had magical powers and stories about them are part of the South Asian folk narrative tradition. For example, among various magical stories connected to the Dargah of the Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer is the belief that you cannot decide or plan to travel to Ajmer, and one can go only when called by the saint. So, anyone planning the travel does not talk about it and remains mentally open to the plan being canceled for unpredictable reasons. If one is able to reach Ajmer, one ascribes it to the command from the Dargah. Like fairies, the Dargah are supposed to fulfill wishes and are believed in by Muslims and Hindus. As such these are very important figures – imaginary and historical – dotting the landscape from Pakistan to Bangladesh, that is, from the west to the east of the sub-continent. Their “secular” nature is so prominent that the Islamic terrorists have attacked places connected to Sufi saints. Although, the international scholarship on fairy tales does not see these as fairy tales and would classify them under “belief narratives,” yet it seems to me that any fairy tale requires “belief” or rather “suspension of belief” in the rational reality to be able to be an effective tool of storytelling.

WONDER/MAGIC AND NATURE

The relationship between human beings, animals and plants seems to be without any borders in the folk narratives across the world. Human characters marry people of the animal world and/or transform into forms of the plant world. Lutz Röhrich has argued that animal tales reflect something about the real relationship of the human beings with their environment and that those which we find most wondrous belong to a time when the distances between human, animals and plants were not as large as in the modern post-industrial world. “These tales depict a very ancient relationship to animals: The animals are not a second-class creature but rather the human’s equal or even superior” (Röhrich 1991: 75). Animals as helpers or spouses of human protagonists reflect a time when human beings depended more directly on animals for their survival. This theoretical proposition is understandable. For example, today some children in the developed world do not even know where milk comes from! Stories of intimate relationship between human beings, animals and plants are spread throughout the sub-continent, but here we will consider as examples some of the tales coming from the tribal peoples of the north-eastern part of India.

Example 1:

A girl wants to marry a handsome stranger who turns out to be a python. She marries him anyway but keeps his identity hidden from her parents. After marriage, while she is living in the snake kingdom, her mother wants to visit her. The python husband’s parents turn everyone into humans. Her mother goes home happy along with a gift of gold. Then she returns for another visit. Again, the girl’s parents-in-law transform everyone into humans, but this time the grandchildren are forgotten and they remain as baby snakes. The mother of the girl kills them. The girl, afraid of the wrath of her husband, smuggles her mother and herself out of the snake kingdom. Her husband is furious at her treachery and obviously at her mother. He sends two Cobras to kill them but mother and daughter evade the snakes by hiding in a bamboo basket. This is said to be the beginning of human-snake enmity.

(Miri 2008: 92–3)

Example 2:

A version of “The Frog Prince” also exists in north east Indian tribal narratives. However, in this story, in contrast to the common European tradition, a frog forces a man to give him his daughter in marriage by using threats and bringing a flood. The frog becomes the man’s son-in-law and on a festival in which men dance transforms himself into a handsome man.

(Kojé 2015: 55–6)

Example 3:

In a Lushai folktale called “Changsili and a Python,” two sisters go to a forest every day. One sister has a romance with a snake/python. When her parents get to know of the relationship, the father kills the snake. The daughter is obviously very sad. The father also cuts open her stomach from which many baby snakes come out. He kills all but one, which escapes into the wild. Later

the escaped snake is seen as one who hisses loudly, scares and bites people. Eventually, a young man tricks and kills him.

(Gan-Chaudhuri 2015: 182–5)

Example 4:

In another tale, titled “The Palas Flower,” a young man goes to a forest to find the beautiful Palas flower. He is directed by different people to keep going into the depths of the forest. Finally, where he sees the flower, he also meets a girl. Surprised at finding a girl living in dense forest, he questions her and discovers that she has been brought up by a tiger who loves her very much. As their relationship takes off she hides him from the tiger, and cunningly finds out where the tiger’s treasure is hidden. Together the human couple deceives the tiger, rob him of his wealth and elope to live happily ever after.

(Mishra and Dash 1998: 93–5)

In all of these examples, the harmonious nature of the relationship between humans and animals are broken, more often than not, by the cruelty or cunning of the human being. In none of the stories does an animal turn out to be a nasty being. This says a lot about the way the tribal people see the role of the humans in this world. These ancient stories reflect a perception that is far friendlier to other creatures than the discourse of modernity centered on all other beings of this planet, or establishing an artificial idea of conservation and protection of wild life.

There are numerous examples in these traditional narratives of human beings transforming into plants, particularly after an unnatural death. An example of this may be found in the story of a childless king with six wives. A woman promises to bear him seven sons and a daughter if he marries her. This seventh wife fulfills her promise, but the other six wives hatch a conspiracy. They tell the king that she has given birth to cats and dogs and so the king orders that they should all be killed and buried. The seven children become seven trees and a plantain. In this form, they sing their story to the king and get justice for their mother and punishment for the six queens (Rodrigues 2015: 322–6).

In the nearly-non-existent boundary between the animal, plant and human is the evidence of human life lived in close proximity with nature. This closeness creates a relationship very different from the one that the modern person has with nature which tends to be more remote and often depends upon a romanticized view of the natural world. Closeness to nature, by contrast, results in a fear of nature’s powers and a diminishment of faith in the supremacy of the human being.

WONDER/MAGIC AND REALISM COMBINE IN A DISTINCTIVE NARRATIVES SERIES

One of the most iconic sets of stories that are widely known across India are the 25 tales of Bikram-Baital, also known as the *Vikram-Vetal* series. Vikram, the short form of the famous king Vikramaditya, or Bikram – a colloquial expression – is a set of stories that combine magic with realism to produce the most attractive form of magical realism. The historicity of Vikramaditya is not very certain. One estimate suggests that he was a king in ancient India around 57 BCE, while other estimates

consider him to be a mythical/legendary figure. What is certain is that there is a large number of legends or stories about Vikramaditya that figure in the earliest of story collections. Through the stories emerges the image of a very wise, generous, learned and just king. He is the ideal king of the folkloric imagination of the sub-continent. Among hundreds of stories about him, some are firmly bound in two sets: one, a set of 25 stories (*Baital Pachisi*) and another of 32 stories (*Singhasan Battisi*). Here we will discuss the *Baital Pachisi*.

This cycle of stories has a frame story, which tells of an ascetic who brings a piece of fruit daily to Raja Vikramaditya who passes it on to his storekeeper, who in turn throws it away. After ten years the king opens one of the fruits and discovers in it a rare gem. He then asks the ascetic what he wants of him. The ascetic says he needs a corpse for his ritual fire; this corpse hangs on a tree in a place full of ghosts and other deadly beings. Vikram agrees to go there. He finds the corpse hanging on a tree and unwilling to come with him. He forcibly lifts the corpse on his shoulders and starts to walk back home from the ghostly landscape. The corpse then speaks and says that to pass the long journey he will tell a story. At the end of each story, he will pose a question. If Vikram does not know the answer, the corpse will remain on his shoulder and go to the ascetic; if he knows the answer and keeps silent, his head will split into two, and if he answers correctly, the corpse will go back to his tree. The important thing here is that each story has a legal-ethical problem that needs a solution. Each problem is so complex that the solution is certainly not easy to guess even by the present-day reader. As such the story is very engrossing, and Vikram is able to answer 24 of the 25 questions. The answers establish Vikram's genius, but they also legitimise Baital's right to fly back to his tree, thus compelling Vikram to repeatedly go back to the graveyard and return with him again. This procedure takes place 24 times, but the twenty fifth story stumps Vikram too and he remains silent, thus enabling him to fulfill his promise to the ascetic.

One of these stories (the ninth tale) was made even more famous by the German author Thomas Mann (1959) as *Die vertauschten Köpfe* (*The Transposed Heads*, 1940). This is the story of a woman who is travelling with her husband and his friend. The husband is a learned Brahman and of lean body, while the friend is an ironsmith and of strong build. On the journey, the two men offer their heads to a goddess in a temple; the woman is distraught and prays to the goddess who allows her to place the heads back on the bodies. In a panic, she places the husband's head on his friend's body and vice versa. The question is, who is her husband now? Citing the Hindu scriptures in which the head is considered to be the supreme part of the body, Vikram answers that the body that bears the husband's head is the husband of this woman.

In another story (tale six), a girl has three suitors when she dies of a snake-bite. One of the suitors collects her bones and goes away wandering. The second gathers her ashes and retires to live in a hut all alone. The third becomes a wanderer who learns the magic of bringing the dead back to life. He gets the other two together, places bones and ashes in a heap and, chanting some verses, makes the girl come alive. The question is, who should wed her now given the equal roles the suitors have played in her revival? If the first two had not preserved the bones and the ashes the third could not have used his knowledge. Vikram answers, that the one who preserved her bones becomes her son because this is the duty of a (Hindu) son, and the one who gave back her life takes on the relationship of father; therefore, only the one who kept the ashes and stayed mourning for her has the right to wed her.

Such are the stories of the *Baital Pachisi*, which employ magic and wonder to discuss real issues of social life. The stories enchant just as they give a glimpse into the logic and ethics of the Hindu world-view. They exist in the oldest of collections, in vernacular and in Sanskrit, in tales for adults and for children, in comics and television series and on the internet. This was one of the first books of Indian fairy tales to be translated into English. Its importance was such that it was one of the books on which the applicants for service in the East India Company were tested. As William Burkhardt Barker observes in his parallel translation of the text into Hindustani, Nagari and English of 1855:

The Baital Pachisi has been selected as one of the test-books in the examination of candidates for the Military service in the Hon. East India Company, and is admirably adapted for this purpose. The frequent recurrence of the ordinary forms of colloquial expression makes it also an excellent class-book for the use of Students of Hindustani.

(Barker 1855: vi)

Conclusion

The fairy-tale world of South Asia is created by the imagination of the diverse peoples and communities that inhabit it. Therefore, it is as varied and as complex. In spite of the complexity, it can be said that wonder/magic tales in South Asia have an ethical orientation. Wonder/magic is employed to take the listener away from rational reality, experience another perspective, and find a connection with a higher truth. This is much in keeping with Max Lüthi's definition of the European *Märchen*. This parallel is significant because the forms of magic/wonder in South Asia and Europe are very different from each other. Nineteenth-century folk-narrative scholars such as Theodor Benfey would have liked to explain this by the theory of the single origin of all European folk narratives, that single place of origin being India (see Thompson 1946: 376–8). The important thing, however, is that wonder/magic in folk narratives across continents is not a mere tool of storytelling, but has a purpose: to create a new perspective on rational reality. This capability may be the reason for the continued narration and relevance of fairy tales and other forms of wonder/magic narratives in spite of changes in rational realities and the media of communication. One can say that for the fairy-tale world not to be a mere construct, the element of belief is very important. This element of belief dominates the fairy-tale world of South Asia – both within the stories and outside of them. The element of belief connects wonder/magic to real life and lends our banal existence a magical nature.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

LOVELY FAIRIES AND CRAFTY GHOSTS IN INDIAN TALES



Pamela Lothspeich

INTRODUCTION

India abounds in stories involving magical characters and fantastic plot elements. To say this is not to romanticize a timeless, exotic India, but simply to acknowledge that people living in the Indian subcontinent, like those in other parts of the world, have long entertained, expressed fears and hopes, reflected on the human condition, and spoken out against injustices in the world through stories that in some ways defy rational thought and historical empiricism. I should add that much of the story literature I address below is relevant to the entire Indian subcontinent, not just the contemporary state of India, which dates to 1947. Stories, especially oral stories, do not heed national boundaries, but instead follow people and languages and the Indian subcontinent has seen the blending of many cultures – and stories – over the course of its recorded history.

There are many ways to think about and categorize story literature in India, but from the outset we may observe that English categories for ‘not-empirically true’ stories – fairy tales, myths, legends, fables, romances, and epics – are inadequate at containing them. India has its own ways of speaking about and classifying its stories, and its own lexicon of symbols, motifs and themes, in its different languages and regions, and among its various ethnic communities. But one coalescing principle about much story literature in India prior to the modern period, here conveniently designated circa 1800–present, is that much of it began in oral form, and much of it was framed in verse.

The first Europeans to seriously engage with Indian story literature did so during the colonial period, and many of these colonial mediators brought with them imperialist aspirations and Orientalist biases. These early scholars were the first to set about the task of forcing Indian story literature into the global North’s generic categories – some of which I, admittedly, have recourse to here. Beginning with Sanskrit literature from the classical period, many imperialist scholars engaged with Indian traditions with the inglorious intention of knowing their subjects to better colonize and subordinate them. Forever after, masterworks like the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* would be known in the English-speaking world as ‘epics.’ The *Pāñcatantra* would be a compendium of ‘fables.’ The texts collectively known as the *Purāṇas* would be ‘myths,’ though virtually any and all story literature in the Hindu canon including the Hindu

‘epics’ would also qualify as mythology. *Qissas/dāstāns*, meanwhile, would be lumped under ‘romances,’ and so on. This short list of examples, by no means exhaustive, points at the enormity of the task of finding common narrative ground between the literatures of western Europe and South Asia, and the pervasive Eurocentrism in much English-language thinking about Indian story literature.

Over the centuries some old collections of stories which may be 2,000 years old, like the *Bṛhatkathā*, thought to be in Paishachi, lost in written form, and the *Pañcatantra*, in Sanskrit, often compared with Aesop’s fables, later resurfaced in Persian and Arabic translations/adaptations under the patronage of Muslim rulers in the middle period, and were also folded into later Sanskrit works. For example, Somadeva’s *Kathāsaritsāgara* (eleventh century) seems to have derived from the *Bṛhatkathā*, while Narayana’s *Hitopadeśa* (ninth or tenth century), is largely based on the *Pañcatantra*, works which loosely conform to the English genres of folk/fairy tales and fables, respectively.

Another early work in the fairy-tale vein, *Daśakumāracarita* (Tales of the Ten Princes, seventh or eighth century), composed by the aesthetician Dandin is an example of the uncommon Sanskrit prose romance. This collection of tales tells of the adventures of ten young men. One of them, Rajavahan, goes missing, and the other nine go on a tour of the world to recover him, along the way destroying many rogues and demons, and saving and having liaisons with an array of beautiful princesses. In one of the most fanciful tales, Dandin delights us with his poetic virtuosity by composing an entire episode without the benefit of labial sounds – no mean feat. The excuse for this demonstration of poetic skill, as Mantragupta explains, is that his lower lip has been wounded by the love play of his beloved.

Much pre-modern story literature in India does not fall neatly into the categories of ‘sacred’ and ‘secular,’ an ingrained western binary. But historically, ideas from Hinduism and Sufism have especially left their mark on storytelling in India. With respect to the former, we can look to the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (circa 400 BCE–300 CE), and the *Purāṇas* (circa 350–1500 CE), works composed over many centuries, which tell of the deeds and miracles of Hindu deities and heroes. But they also contain interesting stories involving supernatural beings that are neither fully divine nor fully human, such as *apsarās* (fairies or nymphs), *gandharvas* (celestial musicians), and *yakṣas* (nature spirits), as well as various demons.

The Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* itself, the shorter of the two epics, at about 24,000 verses, may be considered an elaborate fairy tale, at least according to one of its chief translators and interpreters, Robert P. Goldman. He writes that the central event of the opening of the story, “the dispossession of a favorite child [Rama] through the machinations of a wicked and pitiless stepmother, is commonplace in fairy tales,” and intimates that magical elements continue apace throughout Rama’s 14-year forest exile with his wife and brother (Goldman 1984: 41–2). The next major turning point in the story, the abduction of a chaste wife (Sita) by an arrogant demon-king (Ravana), again invites us to consider that we are indeed in a fairy-tale world. Winding up the whole story in brief, Goldman relates that “when told in outline, the story seems at times more like Puss in Boots than a great heroic saga or courtly epic” (42).

Whilst it is possible to find parallels between the Indian stories and European fairy tales – the comparative Indo-European method was once a popular academic pursuit – to simply claim that the classical Hindu literary corpus is full of magical creatures

and enchanted places is to invite misunderstanding if not cultural stereotypes, given the long history of European imperialism in the region and attendant Orientalist discourses that work to infantilize, eroticize, ‘other,’ discredit, and otherwise subordinate Indian cultures to those of Europe. In a classic work, for example, Partha Mitter has critiqued Europeans’ interpretations of Indian art, much of it religious in nature, from the earliest recorded accounts in travel literature to representations in the early twentieth century, noting a strong tendency to exoticize and demonize, especially in the earliest examples (Mitter 1992). Similarly, in his introduction to an expansive treatment of Hanuman, often casually called ‘the monkey god’ by Americans and Europeans, Philip Lutgendorf helpfully details the global North’s long fascination with, and misunderstandings of Hindu representations of the divine in animal and semi-animal form (Lutgendorf 2007).

To fetishize and misrepresent these sacred forms as early Orientalists often did, has understandably incited consternation in some Hindu quarters, just as to call revered religious literature ‘mythology’ has, for seeming to reduce it to the level of superstition or child’s play, though this is not the intent in academic discourse. Another bone of contention has been American and European scholars’ inclination to draw academic attention to sexual themes and symbols in Hindu literature, art and iconography – attention some Hindu critics have viewed as exaggerated, if not completely unwarranted – though they are a legitimate part of the cultural record (see, for instance, McComas 2011). With this background in mind, I begin here with a discussion of a figure from Indian literature and art, well known for her beauty and power of seduction.

THE APSARĀ: AN INDIAN FAIRY

One powerful and recurrent motif in classical Hindu works like the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*, is that of the sexual temptress, particularly in the form of the *apsarā*. This figure also appears in Buddhist and Jain literature and art, and as Hinduism and Buddhism spread east and southeast, the concept of the *apsarā* moved with these traditions, evident not only in literature, but also in such forms as dance and sculpture.

Hindu stories about *apsarās* present us with a celestial reality that is startlingly removed from the world of the European fairy helper, especially as she manifests in sanitized and commodified fairy-tale renderings in print and digital media. The *apsarā* is, of course, youthful and supremely beautiful, according to standards codified in classical Sanskrit treatises. She is also an unapologetically sexualized character. A suprahuman, not-quite-divine character, the *apsarā* resides in an other-worldly realm, typically Indra’s heaven. But the *apsarā* also has a very serious purpose in that she seems to symbolize human desire and more specifically our attachment to sensual pleasures, the mechanism which propels the karmic process and keeps us enmeshed in the rounds of rebirth (*saṃsāra*).

The *apsarā*’s role in classical Indian literature is to tempt and thereby thwart the would-be spiritual renouncer, always understood to be male, and bring him back to earth, so to speak, in what is plainly a heteronormative universe. Most often she is sent at the behest of a male deity, often Indra, who is jealous over some mortal’s spectacular rise in status through the power of his own asceticism, and wants to bring him down a few spiritual notches, lest he equal the gods. The object of the *apsarā*’s

flirtations, the spiritual aspirant, is often a brahmin ascetic, practicing austerities in the forest to achieve *mokṣa* or salvation: release from the rounds of rebirth. The salient point is that the male subject should be induced to spill his semen, whether through sexual intercourse or otherwise, due to the cause-and-effect relationship, the literature suggests, that obtains between a loss of semen and a loss of spiritual merit (and power).

On the face of it, the fact that the *apsarā* figure is so prevalent in classical story literature with philosophical underpinnings seems to suggest that sex is the most difficult desire for men to overcome, but in a larger sense, she may stand in for all human attachment to the body. In this view, sex is really just a sign for the mundane, entangling pleasures of the domesticated world. Likewise, when read superficially, such stories seem to be about jealous gods' fears of being dethroned by powerful ascetics, suggesting an eternal power struggle between the gods and mortals. Yet they also seem to speak to a deeper internal human predicament – the tension between the twin lures of the material and the spiritual worlds.

The *apsarā* Urvashi is one of the oldest and most frequently cited members of her class. She and her beloved Pururavas first appear in Book 10, hymn 95 of the ancient Hindu scripture known as the *Ṛgveda* (circa 1700–1500 BCE), and then reappears in a later Vedic treatise, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (circa 700–500 BCE), the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, and periodically in the epic and Puranic literature (K.F. Geldner cited in Gaur, and Gaur 1974: 142). These later accounts expand on the brief dialogue in the *Ṛgveda*, elucidating how Urvashi has an earthly romance with King Pururavas, who later turns out to be an ancestor of the two warring families of the *Mahābhārata*.

Pururavas and Urvashi are said to enjoy four happy years together until, tricked by the celestial musicians known as *gandharvas*, the king commits an ethical breach by breaking one of his promises to her, to never let Urvashi see him naked. Although Pururavas begs her to stay lest he commit suicide, Urvashi coldly departs saying only that she will later send their son to him and warning, in the *Ṛgveda*: “I am as hard to catch as the wind,” and later, “[f]emale friendship does not exist, their hearts are the hearts of jackals” (Varadpande 2005: 143–4). The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* adds more details and goes on to explain that Urvashi took pity on Pururavas and agreed to meet him in a year. She also explains how he can be with her permanently in Indra's heaven. The king must complete a year-long *yajña* (ritual or sacrifice) which will transform him into a *gandharva*, the natural partner of an *apsarā*, which he does (Varadpande 2005: 142–7; Jones and Ryan 2006: 41–2).

The great court poet Kalidasa famously adapted the story of Pururavas and Urvashi in his play, *Vikramorvaśīyam* (Urvashi Won by Valour, circa 450). As was conventional for court poets at that time, Kalidasa expanded the kernel of a popular narrative into a grand drama in extravagantly ornamented and diglossic Sanskrit and Prakrits, in both prose and verse. He also revised the curse's stipulation (should Pururavas see the face of their son ...), and added a number of plot twists, as when the lovers are separated and Urvashi is temporarily turned into a vine. Writing under royal patronage, Kalidasa rendered both the king and the *apsarā* into more virtuous and human characters. He also softened the ending so that the couple is able to live out Pururavas's earthly life together.

Urvashi also plays a pivotal role in the main story of the *Mahābhārata*, in her dealings with the Pandava hero Arjuna, long after her relationship with Pururavas. This narrative thread is likely a latter addition, since it is not in the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* (Sukthankar 1933–1959), but it is perhaps the most well-known story about the *apsarā*. While on a mission to procure celestial weapons, Arjuna visits the heavenly court of his birth father, Lord Indra. While there, Arjuna learns the art of music and dance from the *gandharvas*. Also in attendance is Urvashi, who becomes smitten with Arjuna and proposes a liaison with him which he rejects, citing their distant familial tie. This prompts Urvashi to unleash a blistering curse. Here is how the exchange transpires in the most widely watched TV adaptation of the *Mahābhārata*, the B.R. Chopra series, which first aired in 1988–1990:

ARJUNA: Don't you remember? My ancestor King Pururavas was infatuated by your beauty. And you lived with him as a wife. That's why I can only see you as I see Mother Kunti and (Step)mother Madri.

URVASHI: *Apsarās* are no one's mothers or wives! We are just representations of beauty. Accept this representation of beauty!

ARJUNA: I have accepted you in the form of a mother. There can be no other relationship between a mother and son. Forgive me, but I can only be a son to you. Never a man. Always a son. Never a man. Never.

URVASHI: Then I curse you! May you always be a son. Never a man! From today on, may you live as a eunuch!

(*Mahābhārata* 1988–1990: episode 53)

Mollified by Indra, Urvashi mitigates her curse so that it will only last a year. Conveniently, the curse takes effect years later while Arjuna and his brothers are living incognito in the court of Virata during the thirteenth and final year of their banishment from their kingdom, due to the machinations of their evil cousins, the Kauravas. As a condition of their exile, the Pandavas must escape notice by their cousins or else face another 13-year exile. Under these circumstances, Arjuna takes on the 'disguise' of a eunuch/music and dance teacher, putting formerly learned skills to good use.

This story is still very much in the popular imaginary, one potent example being the opening sequence in the Telugu film *Narthanaśālā* (The Dance Pavilion, 1963), which deals with the *Virāṭaparvan* (Book of Virata) in the *Mahābhārata*. Besides featuring captivating dance sequences and legendary actor N.T. Ramarao in the role of Krishna, the scene here too explains how Arjuna was cursed by Urvashi to 'lose' his masculinity for a year, but also builds up a romance between Arjuna's son and Virata's daughter.

There is also a famous story about Urvashi set much earlier, in the time of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but it is told in both epics. It is also relayed in other classical sources including Buddhist ones. In Hindu versions of the story, Urvashi is sent by a jealous Indra to dissuade Vibhandhaka, a *ṛṣi* ('seer') from his ascetic pursuits. Upon seeing Urvashi, Vibhandhaka ejaculates into a lake, and its water is later drunk by a deer who gives birth to Rishyashringa ('He-with-the-horn-of-a-deer'), for he is born with a protuberance on his head. Abandoned by his mother, Rishyashringa grows up in a forest hermitage completely ignorant of women (Smith 2009: 180–1). One day a king, Romapada or Lomapada by name, is advised that there is a highly potent yet virginal sage, Rishyashringa, who can save his kingdom from a crippling drought, if

he can be induced to abandon the forest and marry his daughter Shanta ('Peace'). So Romapada dispatches a team of young women to Rishyashringa's forest hermitage to lure him to the city which seems to symbolize the world of the senses (Goldman 1984: 139–43; Smith 2009: 181–7). In the *Mahābhārata* there is an ironic interlude in which an enamored Rishyashringa mistakes a courtesan for a boy, enraging his ascetic father who angrily condemns women as demons (*rākṣasas*):

Yes, they are beautiful, son, but they are cruel: they use every means to arouse the desire of sages in the forests, and so banish them from both happiness and the heavenly realms. The disciplined sage will have nothing whatever to do with them in his quest for the realms of the virtuous.

(Smith 2009: 185)

Once Rishyashringa breaks his penances, departing for the city (Goldman 1984: 142), and settling in the women's quarters of the palace (Smith 2009: 186), Indra releases the rains. Once the couple is married, the story continues further in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where Rishyashringa is subsequently requested by King Dasharatha to oversee the sacrifice which results in the birth of Rama and his other three sons, an important plot point (Goldman 1984: 143–59).

The symbolic connection between Rishyashringa's semen and life-giving rain is an obvious one, but more germane here is the way the example of Rishyashringa affords a harmonious accommodation of both the ascetic and domestic paths. Urvashi reminds us that *apsarās* cannot be real mothers; and Shanta, that real mothers grant a different kind of immortality through procreation.

Another classical character of mixed human and fairy ancestry is Shakuntala, daughter of the *apsarā* Menaka and the sage Vishwamitra. Her story appears early in the *Mahābhārata*: one day a king, Dushyanata, enters a forest and falls in love with Shakuntala, despite their apparent difference in station. Still, Dushyanta induces the girl to marry him via a *gāndharva* wedding, that is, one of mutual consent, agreeing to her condition that their son become heir to the throne. Soon afterwards, Dushyanta returns to his palace and callously fails to send for Shakuntala as he had promised. Later, Shakuntala travels to Dushyanta's court with their six-year-old son and angrily confronts him. The king does finally acknowledge and accept her, but only after being prompted by a voice from heaven (Smith 2009: 23–5). Later, Kalidasa amplified this seed story in his magnificent fifth-century play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*. In doing so, he exonerated the king and transformed Shakuntala from an outspoken, self-possessed woman of fairy blood into a submissive, virginal girl. Among many new plot details couched in resplendent poetry, there is the addition of a disgruntled sage's curse and the device of a signet ring which the king gives to Shakuntala with a promise to send for her, upon his departure. After giving birth to their son, Bharata, however, Shakuntala loses the ring, and the sage's curse proves prophetic when the king indeed forgets Shakuntala. However, he ultimately recovers the ring and recognizes and accepts Shakuntala and their son when they meet in a chance encounter.

The Shakuntala narrative and many other classical stories have been adapted into modern forms including poems, novels, and TV programs and films, attesting to the longevity of the tales. In the colonial period retelling classical tales was one way to challenge European imperialism, and part of the appeal of Shakuntala's story was

surely its potential for nationalist feeling given that her son, Bharata, patriarch of the *Bhārata* dynasty, is the namesake of the country. Some writers of the colonial period adapted the story of Shakuntala and others from classical Hindu sources in ways that were politically subversive. Some have also used the same stories in ways that question or critique social practices and power structures. That is the case with two examples involving Shakuntala, Yashpal's *Apsarā kā śrāp* (The Fairy's Curse, 1965) and Yadavendra Sharma 'Chandra's' *Ek niyati aur* (Another Destiny, 1977), which both invoke messages of female empowerment and social justice. Eliminating the sage's curse, the former novel is especially scathing in its treatment of Dushyanta and condemnation of the institution of *pātivrat dharma* (religiously sanctioned devotion to the husband). In fact, it makes Menaka the mouthpiece for much of its invective against gender inequities and global patriarchy. At the end of the novel, the *apsarā* Menaka essentially curses her daughter Shakuntala to her fate after she forgives her errant husband.

The many cinematic adaptations of the Shakuntala tale, by contrast, are often highly sanitized and romanticized, in keeping with the mythological genre on screen. For instance, in the 2009 TV series named after the heroine, sexual content and potentially objectionable elements like the wide age difference between Shakuntala and Dushyanta, and the king's forwardness are obscured. This is comparable to the European situation, in which highly violent and sexually explicit tales were reimagined as simpler and 'safer' children's fairy tales in an era that saw a shift from feudalist monarchies to a capitalist nation-states (see, for instance, Tatar 1992).

THE *PARĪ* AND CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

In the middle period, the arrival of people from western and central Asia brought new stories (and story forms) into the subcontinent, and these stories mingled with preexisting stories and engendered new ones (see, for instance, Pritchett 1985 and 1991). Some tales, traveling from as far as the Arabian Peninsula, were filled with magical happenings and fanciful worlds of *jinns* (genies) and *parīs* (fairies). The Arabic classic, *The One Thousand and One Nights*, was readily embraced, assimilated, and expanded upon in India, as was the Persian work, *The Tale of the Four Dervishes*. An Urdu version of the latter, Mir Amman's *Bāgh o bahār* (Garden and Spring), was published by the colonial institution of Fort William College in 1805, and according to Frances Pritchett, it was their "single most popular Urdu publication" (Pritchett 2005). In the first half of the nineteenth century, Fort William College in Calcutta was a major center for language training and translation projects, and many of its publications took the form of fairy tales, fables, and folktales. These relatively simple and instructive stories were conducive to the aspirations of the colonial government, for they allowed British men to gain linguistic and cultural competencies – to become 'experts' in the field of India—to better know and master their colonial subjects. The commercial vernacular press also helped circulate much marvelous literature in the colonial period, for example, the Urdu translation of the massive Persian romance, *The Tale of Amir Hamzah*, supplementing the work of professional oral storytellers.

The influence of Sufi-inspired storytelling in tandem with the spread of Islam in the subcontinent cannot be underestimated. The Sufi romance was a poetic form beloved by mystically inclined Muslim court poets. To take one example, Manjhan's

sixteenth-century romance *Madhumālātī* in Avadhi, regales us with the story of a love-struck prince and princess whose first blush of love occurs via a bed trick facilitated by match-making fairies. Much of the tale concerns the lovesick prince's long ascetic quest, punctuated by various ordeals and insights, before he is finally reunited with his beloved Madhumalati, who also serves as a mystical sign for God. Ideally young and beautiful, she is compared to a divine mirror for the benefit of the spiritual aspirant, and temporarily takes the form of a bird flying through the heavens, symbols associated with the divine in Sufi literature. Their marriage and sexual consummation (and that of a parallel couple) at the end of the romance confirm the goal of the Sufi quest: *fanā* or absorption of the soul with God. One especially striking element of this Sufi romance and others of its kind, is the natural way it incorporates elements of both Islamic mysticism and Hindu mysticism, the latter demonstrated by references to such things as yoga philosophy, the alchemical subtle body, and classical Hindu terminology such as *māyā* (divine illusion) and *tapasya* (ascetic practice).

Still alive and well, the fairy made a big appearance three centuries later in what is often considered the first play in Urdu, *Indarsabhā* (The Court of Indar or Indra, 1853), by Agha Hasan Amanat, though it lacks any formal divisions and is entirely in verse. The play, an opera really, is associated with the court of Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Awadh (ruled 1847–1856), who may have commissioned it, and seems to have been based on earlier *parī*-themed works in Urdu (Hansen 2001: 79–82; Taj 2007: 115–17). Since its creation, *Indarsabhā* has been widely published, adapted, and imitated in Indian theatre and film. Debuting in Bombay's commercial 'Parsi theatre' by at least 1864, it remained wildly popular for decades. It was also the subject of one of the first Indian films with sound in 1932, with a record seventy-one songs (Hansen 2001: 90, 103–5).

Four fairies, no less, figure prominently in this spectacular play. These color-coded fairies, the Topaz Fairy, the Sapphire Fairy, the Ruby Fairy, and the Emerald Fairy, serve as entertainers in Indar's heavenly court. One day during a music and dance program, the Emerald Fairy becomes upset and departs when Indar falls asleep during her performance. While wandering outside the palace, she relays to Kala Dev (the Black Demon), that while en route to Indar's court, she fell in love with a handsome sleeping prince, Gulfam. She would now like him to deliver the prince to her in Indar's garden, which he does. When Gulfam awakens and objects to his abduction, the Emerald Fairy placates him by agreeing to let him see the fairies performing in Indar's court, despite a ban on human entry. However, once inside, Gulfam's presence is detected, causing Indar to imprison him in a well and banish the Emerald Fairy, her hair and wings clipped. Distraught, the Emerald Fairy wanders the world in the guise of an ascetic, searching for her beloved, singing along the way. When news of her voice and beauty reach Indar, he has her brought before him. Unrecognized, the Emerald Fairy sings for Indar, moving him to finally grant her a boon of whatever she desires. Naturally, she asks for her beloved to be released, and the two are joyously reunited (Hansen 2001: 83; Taj 2007: 86–8).

Indarsabhā, along with many other plays in the Parsi theater, were hybrid in nature – and not just in the sense that companies adopted certain western theatrical conventions and initially staged Indianized versions of Shakespeare's plays, which they did, but more impactfully so, in the way they artfully blended ideas and cultural

forms (language, poetry, music, and dance) from different traditions in South Asia. Although *Indarsabhā* is seemingly set in a Hindu context (the god Indra's heaven), its setting has much affiliation with the Persian-inspired court of Wajid Ali Shah, who was a great patron of the performing arts and a poet himself. Then too the fairies, who combine elements of both Persian *paris* and Sanskrit *apsarās*, are as though the nawab's royal courtesans (Taj 2007: 102–3).

Until its decline around the 1940s, the traveling companies of the Parsi theatre (and the urban theatres of colonial India generally) often gave voice to anticolonial sentiment and social reform, the former often coded in covert symbols and allusions, especially given that the British actively censored Indian theatre after the passage of the Dramatic Performances Act in 1876. Not surprisingly, *Indarsabhā*, with its unique vision of Indian cultural and royal authority, prospered in the period immediately following the British's annexation of Awadh in 1856, and the Rebellion of 1857, India's First War of Independence. But other plays too, ones drawing on a rich storehouse of Indian tales, also presented other possibilities and worlds, where notorious villains and monsters were laid low, and legendary heroes and gods showed the way of the righteous.

Meanwhile, *Arabian-Nights*-derived tales and new imitative ones provided ample, much-loved material not only for the Parsi theatre, but also for the film industry. So-called '*parī*' or '*jādū*' (magic) films depicting what Rosie Thomas has called India's "imaginary, quasi-Islamicate Orient" (Thomas 2013: 33), full of swashbuckling heroes, beautiful maidens, stunts, and magic tricks, have been a staple of the Indian film industry, possibly beginning with Hiralal Sen's nonextant silent film *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (c.1903) (Thomas 2013: 8). And notably, the brothers J.B.H. and Homi Wadia (and others) made a string of such fantasy films during their heyday in the 1930s–1970s, ones like *Hātīm Tāi* (1956), which were eagerly consumed by viewers.

LONG-LIVED GHOST STORIES

Ghosts figure prominently not only in the *Arabian Nights*, but across the storytelling spectrum of fairy tales and folktales in India, and they are not necessarily linked to any religious framework. As with *apsarā* and *parī* tales, Indian ghost stories often have a deeper purpose than mere entertainment. Of course, in a general way, ghost stories everywhere seem to be about giving voice to our innate misgivings about death. But in her novel *Sangati* (1994) the Tamil writer Bama suggests that the pervasive belief in *peys* or ghosts among one group, a Dalit community in rural Tamil Nadu, masks uglier realities in the material world. The narrator in fact implies that Dalit women routinely speak of being possessed by ghosts as a coping mechanism for having to endure all manner of indignities, back-breaking labor, unceasing demands from husbands and children, sexual servitude at home, and sexual harassment and rape outside the home: "The ones who don't have the mental strength are totally oppressed; they succumb to mental ill-health and act as if they are possessed by *peys*" (Bama 2005: 58).

Many ghost stories in the folkloric mode, however, invoke the ghost as a persistent prankster and obstructionist. One popular Rajasthani folktale, for instance, tells of a ghost who takes the form (and place) of a young husband when he goes off

on a five-year business trip, deceiving the man's family and beguiling his wife until the doppelganger is finally exposed – and disposed of. This folktale is the basis for the Rajasthani short story, “*Duvidhā*” by Vijaydan Dehta, which was in turn made into the Hindi-Urdu films *Duvidhā* (The Dilemma, 1973) and *Pahelī* (The Riddle, 2005). The former, is an understated art film with beautiful haunting folk music, while the latter is a true commercial Bollywood film with a happy resolution (the ghost possesses the husband), suggesting the great flexibility of the tale.

One long-lived cycle of ghost stories is *Vetālapañcaviṃśati*, or *Twenty-five Ghost Stories*, which appears in *Kathāsaritsāgara* and several other roughly contemporaneous northern Sanskrit sources. This cycle about a crafty ghost (*vetāla* in Sanskrit; *betāl* in Hindi-Urdu) undoubtedly enjoyed wide currency as oral literature even before this, and indeed has up to the present. New adaptations and translations have appeared over the centuries, one of the most influential being *Betāl Paccīsī* (1805), which Mazhar Ali Khan ‘Vila,’ and Lallu Lal, translated into Hindi-Urdu for Fort William College, from a prior translation in Braj Bhasha.

More recently, *Betāl Paccīsī* has found new audiences, especially juvenile ones, in comic books, animated films, and TV programs, like the didactic, lighthearted Hindi mini-series *Vikram aur betāl* (Vikram and the Ghost, 1985). In the TV series, the *betāl*'s stories are tamed and domesticated; they are less violent and sexually explicit than their literary precursors. But they still primarily concern the ethics and duties surrounding social relationships which, in some ways now feel out of place in the world's largest democracy, one governed by a parliamentary system, not a king.

This ghost cycle itself is centered around the conversations of an unlikely duo, a king (Vikram, short for Vikramaditya) and a ghost. There are numerous legends about this king beyond this cycle, and he has been linked to more than one historical king. For his part, the *betāl* is a crafty character distinct from the more general notion of ghost (*bhūta* in Sanskrit and *bhūt* in Hindi-Urdu), which some translators have rendered as ‘vampire.’ This translation fits to the extent that the ghost has a proclivity for hanging upside down in trees and can fly, but he does not have the same obsession with drinking blood and veiled sexual undertones. He is best known for animating corpses, so the designation ‘zombie’ is perhaps closer than ‘vampire.’ It is the shape-shifting *rākṣasas* and blood-thirsty *piśācas*, hunters of cremation grounds and battlefields, who are most often associated with eating human flesh in India's classical literature.

As in *Tales of the Ten Princes*, *Arabian Nights*, *The Tale of the Four Dervishes*, and in Western Europe's *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio and *Le Piacevoli Notti* (The Pleasant Nights) by Giovan Francesco Straparola, there is a framing device which sets the stage for a series of amusing yarns. In *Betāl Paccīsī*, there is a convoluted prologue prior to the main story. However, the TV series begins by simply jumping to the frame narrative: An enigmatic yogi named Shantshil mysteriously presents King Vikram with the gift of a fruit every day. One day the king discovers that each piece of fruit contains a gem or two. Having gotten the king's ear, Shantshil has the king meet him in a forest where he explains that he wants Vikram to help him complete a Tantric ritual which will require Vikram to deliver to him a corpse hanging upside down from a tree in a cremation ground. Thus commanded, Vikram finds the

betāl-possessed corpse and cuts him loose. However, the wily *betāl* re-suspends himself, and agrees to go with Vikram only on the condition that he remain silent or else he will fly back to his tree. So, they set out and the *betāl* proceeds to tell him a story.

The opening episode in the TV series which establishes the frame also contains the famous tale of the ‘switched heads’ (story 6 in *Betāl Paccīsī*). Here a new husband beheads himself, in order to fulfill a vow he made to the Goddess. Fearing blame, his friend also beheads himself. The Goddess reanimates the two men, but due to the bride’s fumbling, the heads are switched. The *betāl* then presents his riddle: which man should she consider her true husband? Vikram responds that she should acknowledge the one with the correct head because the head is the master of the body. The same pattern continues for another 25 episodes, with the *betāl* repeatedly challenging Vikram to complete a riddle concerning some moral point. Unable to resist solving the riddle, the king obliges, causing the ghost to return to his tree again and again.

While the TV series unceremoniously concludes with episode 26, in the classical version the *betāl* manages to stump the king with a riddle which is employed in other tales around the world: a man and his son somehow manage to marry a daughter and her mother, respectively, and here, the subjects in question are royals. The question is, how will the children of the two couples be related? Leaving Vikram speechless, the *betāl* proceeds with the king toward the yogi Shantshil. Along the way, he warns Vikram that if he turns him over to Shantshil as he intends, the yogi will actually kill Vikram! To avoid this end, he tells Vikram that he should behead Shantshil before he does the same to him. The *betāl* then exits the corpse he has been animating. Armed with the *betāl*’s advice, Vikram slays Shantshil, and is lauded by Indra and a host of celestials.

Through the *betāl*’s series of tales, royals and their associates make frequent appearances, but so do brahmins, and ordinary civilians. Kings and princes hunt and fight; they procure beautiful maidens and desire male offspring. In general, the stories tend to support the classical status quo in terms of social hierarchy and gender norms. If both a king and his servant are killed while trying to save the kingdom from a wrathful god, for example, it is the king who is said to make the larger sacrifice; servants *should* serve after all (story 8 in *Betāl Paccīsī*; episode 2 in the TV series). If a princess is courted by four suitors, one from each of the four *varṇas* (social classes or castes), she should marry a *kṣatriya*, that is, one from her own royal class (story 7 in *Betāl Paccīsī*). The TV series, however, largely sidesteps issues of class/caste; there is no explicit mention of the *varṇas* of the four suitors, and the solution to the riddle is merely that the princess should marry the “bravest” man (episode 11 in the TV series).

The *Betāl Paccīsī* cycle is still very much in circulation contemporary India, and sometimes it is far removed from the world of children’s literature. For instance, a parodic online article from 2013, “The Modern Vikram Betaal Story,” shows the face of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh superimposed on that of Vikram who is carrying the *betāl* on his back. The article explains that “Manmohan Vikram Singh” is dogged by “journalist owls,” “reporter bats” and “opposition hyenas” as he carries the “ghost Betaal 2014” on his back – an allusion to Singh’s uphill battle in the 2014 general election. Instead of a yogi, this Vikram is proceeding towards “the

Italian *tantrika*,” an allusion to Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born President of the Indian National Congress or INC (Singh’s party), and the “Queen” who “wielded the real power.” The tale this *betāl* tells “Manmohan Vikram Singh” is one which satirizes the political maneuvering of the INC.

CONCLUSION

Fairy tales thrive in India as in the rest of the world. Some of the most vibrant tales have circulated in the subcontinent since at least the classical period though they have been subject to much modification and reinterpretation along the way. Nowadays, these stories are not only relayed orally, but also retold in modern formats like graphic novels, films, and TV programs. This brief introduction to the popular imaginary of fairy tales in India, while limited in scope, should be sufficient to underscore my earlier proposition about the incongruity of Indian story forms and English literary categories, and the qualified value and hazards of forcing the former into the latter. The danger is not just that something is lost in translation which of course happens, but that entire cultures can be relegated to the civilizational periphery.

Consider a case in point, Andrew Lang’s (1844–1912) 1884 reading of the story of Urvashi and Pururavas as given in the *R̥gveda* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. In that period of colonial history, it was not uncommon for white anthropologists like Lang to create taxonomies of tales, finding common narrative threads across the globe, but always keeping those of Western Europe at the center, like the hub of a narrative wheel with many spokes. For his part, Lang saw the magical and ‘superstitious’ elements in the oral tales as evidence of the tellers’ own incivility or even savagery, and frequently those tellers were colonial subjects. His logic was that if similar tales appeared among more civilized peoples (whites in the global North), then they should be taken as narrative vestiges of their own primitive past, humanity itself being locked in a teleological march toward civilizational perfection (see, for instance, Naithani 2010, which lays bare the problematic motivations of early British folklorists who collected stories across the colonized world).

Lang seems to have based his analysis on translations by the German Sanskritists, Alfred Ludwig (*R̥gveda*) and Max Müller (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*), who was himself an advocate of comparative Indo–European mythology. Rejecting the philological method espoused by Müller and others of that period, Lang favored a behavioral one. That is, he believed that stories were coded with a people’s social practices and norms, present and/or past, which is why he could write that the story of Urvashi and Pururavas is:

a myth told to illustrate, or sanction, a nuptial etiquette. The lives of savages are bound by the most closely-woven fetters of custom. The simplest acts are ‘tabooed,’ a strict code regulates all intercourse. Married life, especially, moves in the strangest fetters.

(Lang 2015: 70)

Lang’s point was that at some time in Indian history there must have been a social prohibition on women seeing their husbands unclothed, whether for some period after the wedding ceremony or permanently, and he makes his case by showing

examples of just such a taboo in various contemporary indigenous cultures in Africa, Australia, Aleutian Islands, and “backwards parts of Europe,” noting Bulgaria and Greece (2015: 71). To an extent, Lang’s approach to stories and cultures prefigured that of later structural anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss, and helpfully moved away from artificial and insular philological interpretations; yet conveniently, it also allowed Lang to keep Europe at the discursive and ideological center. For Lang, the Latin myth of Cupid and Psyche was the narrative hub against which all such tales, including that of Urvashi and Pururavas, should be compared.

At the same time, Lang’s approach allowed him to make disparaging generalizations about whole cultures on the basis of his interpretations. With respect to Pururavas’s ritual action to win back Urvashi, he writes, “It is highly characteristic of the Indian mind that the story should be thus worked into connection with ritual,” again showing Lang’s complicity with the Orientalist project (2015: 68). For Lang, Indians are ‘savages’ imprisoned by their own backwardness, and we may presume, in need of white saviors – a thinly veiled rationale for imperialism.

The two figures I have emphasized here, the fairy and the ghost, have given us an entrée in the vast fairy-tale world of India. Although disarmingly clothed in much humor and hijinks, stories featuring these characters are often about powerful human feelings and experiences. The story of Vikram and the *betāl*, may seem familiar to a global audience given the ubiquity of tales about ghouls and hobgoblins throughout the world, but it has a moral compass and cultural context specific to India. This cycle seems to exploit the basic human fear of death which is like the *betāl* that Vikram cannot shake off, presenting us with the sobering reality of our own mortality. But it also playfully distracts us with a series of riddles and shenanigans that reaffirm existing social norms and power structures.

As we’ve seen in the classical literature, *apsarā* tales typically involve an idealized female beauty who acts as a sexual temptress, though, not merely to titillate or promote promiscuity, but rather to advance theological precepts intrinsic to classical Hinduism. *Apsarā* tales remind us of the profound human desire for pleasure in the here and now through our corporeal selves. But ultimately, they seem to signal that what we really crave is immortality – that afforded on earth through procreation, and that afforded in the afterlife through *mokṣa*. The story of Urvashi cursing Arjuna, for instance, explains why Arjuna must become a eunuch for one year, but it also seems to speak of male fear of female sexuality and power, even as it obliquely cautions us against incest. The examples of *Indarsabhā* and *Madhumālātī*, meanwhile, demonstrate that there are multiple renderings of the ‘fairy’ in Indian storytelling. She may be a romantic, artistic performer as in *Indarsabhā*, or a charming facilitator of divine-human love, as in *Madhumālātī*.

Note that throughout this chapter the ISO 15919 transliteration system for words in Hindi, Sanskrit, and Urdu has been followed.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

FAIRY TALE IN THE BOLLYWOOD FILM

—◆—
Vijay Mishra

The first Indian film was a mythological, *Raja Harishchandra*, made by the legendary Dhundiraj Govind (Dadasaheb) Phalke (1870–1944). Premiered at the Coronation Cinema, Bombay, on May 3, 1913, Phalke’s foundational film ushered in a new era in Indian entertainment (Dwyer 2006: 22–5). Although as a “mythological” its generic antecedent was the Indian epic tradition, as a cinematic expression it owed a lot less to the *Mahābhārata*, the source of the story, and its conventional folk adaptations than to the popular dramatic form known as Parsi theatre. The stories of this theatre, itself a hybrid Western–Indian form, were largely fantasy tales, the common source texts being romances written in the fluid genre of the Persian *mathnavi* (romance) also referred to as *qissā/dāstān* (story/legend). Works such as the *Shah Nama*, *Laila Majnu*, *Bostan*, *Gulistan* (loosely translated into Gujarati and Urdu) and early Hindi romances such as Malik Muhammad Jayasi’s *Padmavat* (1540) and Agha Hasan Amanat’s *Indar Sabha* (1853), were key texts of this theatre. In the latter work, which may be selected as exemplifying the composite theatrical form, the basic genre of the Persian romance with its princes and fairies was overlaid with Urdu ghazals in simple ragas, folk songs and Hindu myths (Hansen 2003).

It was inevitable that when cinema took hold in India, entrepreneurs such as Jamshedji Framji Madan, himself a Parsi producer, would make the transition from Parsi theatre to cinema halls, and from producing drama to producing films. *Indar Sabha* itself was made into a film by J.F. Madan’s third son J.J. Madan in 1932. As with Parsi theatre, these films deployed fantastic elements straight out of the *Arabian Nights*; so much so that the *Arabian Nights* themselves began to reach Indian spectators via their cinematic transformations. Furthermore, Bollywood not only delivered versions of the *Arabian Nights* but used elements from the collection for almost all of its Islamicate films as well as for its Hindu mythologicals.

HOMI WADIA AND THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

To write about the genre of fairy tales in Bollywood – and here we have in mind tales from the *Arabian Nights* – is to write about the work of Homi Wadia (1911–2004). Homi Wadia initially joined Wadia Movietone, the studio and company his brother

Jamshed B.H. Wadia (1901–1986) established when Homi was barely 22. The company produced the great hit of 1933, *Lal-e-Yaman*, a film which triggered Homi Wadia's subsequent interest in the *Arabian Nights*. After that came their massive hit, *Hunterwali* (1935; "Lady of the Whip"), featuring J.B.H. Wadia's discovery Fearless Nadia (a.k.a. Mary Ann Evans, the Australian-born blonde and blue-eyed stunt queen who would reign for a while as Indian cinema's biggest star and whose romantic relationship with Homi Wadia over several decades ultimately culminated in marriage in 1962). But it wasn't until Homi Wadia formed his own production house, Basant Pictures in 1942, after the Wadia brothers amicably agreed to go their separate cinematic ways (albeit still helping each other out on many of their movies), that he began to freely adapt *Arabian Nights* stories. This free adaptation of *Arabian Nights* stories by the form's greatest exponent is crucial to our understanding of "fairy tales" in the Bollywood film. To make the case I will examine three straightforward fantasy films by Homi Wadia, *Alādīn aur uskī jāduī cirāg* (*Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp*, 1952, with the legendary Meena Kumari), *Alibaba aur cālis cor* (*Alibaba and the Forty Thieves*, 1954) and *Hatim Tai* (1956), the latter inspired by the legend of a merchant and poet known for his charity, and given an *Arabian Nights* fantasy spin through the screenplay by J.B.H. Wadia. Such was Homi Wadia's passion for these tales – as well as his awareness that a good yarn respun would still yield a reasonable profit – that he remade *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves* in 1966 (with a very young Sanjeev Kumar as the eponymous hero), *Sāt Savāl* or *Hātīm Tāi* in 1971 and *The Adventures of Aladdin* (*Alādīn ke kārnāme*) in 1978. Largely because of his adaptations, in modern India the *Arabian Nights* fairy tales exist principally as Bollywood creations.

As noted by Ulrich Marzolph in an earlier chapter of this volume, *Aladdin* and *Alibaba* are among the best known *Arabian Nights* tales and both have become part of a world literary canon, despite the fact that they appear for the first time in Antoine Galland's 12-volume French translation of the earliest surviving *Arabian Nights* manuscript compiled in Syria in the fifteenth century, *Les Mille et une nuits contes arabes traduits en français* (*The Thousand and One Nights, Arab Stories translated into French*, 1704–1717). These stories (as well as the popular "The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor"), Galland said, came to him via a Syrian informant, a Christian Maronite scholar, whom he called "Hanna Diab," and are referred to as "orphan stories" (Lyons 2010: II: x–xiii). As a heterogeneous text in various recensions, *The Arabian Nights* may be seen as the first truly world text in that originating in the Indian–Persian–Arab world, it made its way to the West and was applauded by writers from Boccaccio and Goethe to Proust, Poe, Borges and Calvino. George Eliot and Robert Louis Stevenson read it, as did Charles Dickens. In India its presumed origins in the Sanskrit *Kathāsaritsāgara* ("The Ocean of the Rivers of Story") and in the Persian (Farsi) *Hezār Afsāneh* ("A Thousand Tales") entranced speakers of Hindi and Urdu, the inter-related languages of Bollywood cinema.

ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP

The canonical version of *Aladdin* which was readily available to Homi Wadia and his script writers (including his brother J.B.H. Wadia who is credited for "screen story, scenario and additional dialogue" for all their *Arabian Nights* films examined in this chapter) was Sir Richard Burton's translation (2016: 317–403). This translation is a

hefty tale, a novella in length, and is well known except for its ending where, upon the death of the Magician, his even more dangerous brother seeks revenge by impersonating the ascetic Fatimah whom he has killed. The magician's brother persuades Aladdin's wife, Princess Badr-al-Budur, to get the "egg of a fowl called the Rukh" (399), procuring which, through the Jinn of the Lamp, he knows will spell disaster for Aladdin and his family. The Jinn of the Lamp, however, sees through the request, and exposes the impersonator who is also killed by Aladdin.

So, what does Homi Wadia do with this fairy tale? The Wadia brothers were keen followers of the swashbuckling genre of Hollywood and the silent *The Mask of Zorro* (1920) was the source text for their great adventure saga *Hind Kesari* (1935). This was a huge genre in Hollywood which produced films with key sword-fight sequences. A few examples may be noted here: *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1937; Ronald Colman and Douglas Fairbanks Jr), *Robin Hood* (1938; Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone), *The Mark of Zorro* (1940; Tyrone Power and Basil Rathbone), *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1952; Stewart Granger and James Mason), *Scaramouch* (1952; Stewart Granger and Mel Ferrer) and *Lorna Doone* (1951; Richard Greene, William Bishop and Sean McClory) the last of these with its final fight by the waterfall, a *mise en scène* also used as the backdrop for the final fight sequence in Wadia's *Aladdin* (1952). Hollywood had also done its *Arabian Nights* fantasies, distorting the narrative at every turn and making poor parodies as is the case in *Arabian Nights* (1942) and *Alibaba and Forty Thieves* (1944). A little before, the silent film *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924; with Douglas Fairbanks Jr) had been very popular in India and was much admired by the Wadia brothers (Thomas 2013: 32–40). Homi Wadia learnt from both – the swashbuckling classics as well as the mediocre parodies – and transformed them into tales that added to the charm of the original whilst creating versions that became lodged in the Indian psyche. This was Homi Wadia's grand achievement which is why we turn to him when addressing Bollywood fairy tales.

With *Aladdin* (1952) began what could be called a rebirth of the *Arabian Nights* fairy tale for the Indian in modern times. Homi Wadia keeps the broad outline of the *Arabian Nights* tale but he recasts it as a Bollywood romance, itself a musical cinematic form, with an ideological subtext which in this case is directed at truth, justice, honor, filial responsibility and the nature of kingship. The film opens with a magician named Hikmat (B.M. Vyas) demanding from his Bat-Jinn (Jādū Ke Camgādar) the secret of the magic lamp hidden in a cavern in a faraway land. This Bat-Jinn is a slave of the Magician whom he dislikes and in providing the secret of the magic lamp, which can only be retrieved by a man of honor, he makes it clear that the lamp will be the cause of the magician's downfall and his, the Bat-Jinn's, release. All this is a little murky but creates a proleptic narrative in which conditions are laid down in anticipation of their fulfillment. What then are some of the key variations that define Wadia's version, the version which, I argue, becomes the received fairy-tale text for Indians? And why was the film, like the others by Wadia, so successful?

After the Bat-Jinn-Magician prelude the film begins with a challenge: Can Aladdin (Mahipal) see the face of the princess when her entourage comes to the city the next day? He does, as Badr, the princess (Meena Kumari) drops her veil when her palanquin falls after Aladdin has trapped the legs of one of the carriers. He falls in love and is maddened by her image. The princess sees Aladdin and she too is infatuated. Back in the palace, her maids sing (the first of a series of very catchy songs in the film, and

a defining characteristic of Bollywood cinema) “śarmā ke zarā” (“With modesty”) and she joins in. Melancholic Aladdin soon gets into trouble and is taken to court where he is condemned to be whipped. In prison, before the public flogging, a duet is sung: the princess in her palace, Aladdin in prison. The song is “yūhim ulfat ke mārō par ye duniyā zulm kartī hai” (“The world condemns those who pine for love”). Meanwhile, it is revealed that a look-alike usurper has been placed on the throne so that the Vizier Madood Beg’s son, Nizam Beg, can marry the princess. The real Sultan is in prison for refusing to give his daughter’s hand in marriage to the reprobate son of his Vizier. The next day Aladdin is flogged in public and exiled. Hikmat the magician watches the flogging and recognizes a tattooed lamp on Aladdin’s right arm, a sure sign that Aladdin was the man of honor alluded to by the Bat-Jinn. As he is flogged, Princess Badr sings another sorrowful song: “insāf kar vo āsmān” (“Justice please, O heavens”).

The magician (Hikmat) befriends Aladdin and from here on to retrieving the lamp the narrative is sincere to the original except that the Bat-Jinn appears again to warn the magician that the lamp will be his downfall. Wadia adds a few supernatural items to the cavern scene (he extends them considerably in the 1978 remake of the film) but these do not change the storyline. Now that Aladdin has the lamp he can win Princess Badr. In the original tale (as found in the Burton translation) considerable narrative time is given to the “marriage” of the princess to the Vizier’s son and how, with the help of the Jinn, Aladdin keeps the princess’s chastity intact. In the film the princess outright refuses the advances of Nazim Beg whom Aladdin challenges for the hand of the princess after she has rejected the proposed marriage in court. A duel is arranged in which the unscrupulous Nazim will use a poisoned fence. Meanwhile, with the aid of a ring given him by the Jinn of the Lamp, Aladdin and his comic friend Fakruddin manage to visit the princess whose maid Sufia Fakruddin befriends. During one of these visits when another song, “ham se muhabbat kījiye” (“Love me, please”) is sung, Aladdin also uncovers the secret of the usurper Sultan (S.N. Tripathi in a double role) and before the grand duel presents the real Sultan to the court. The duel at an end, the Vizier himself is inadvertently killed with the poisoned fence meant for Aladdin and Nazim Beg exiled. Aladdin marries Badr and overnight the Jinn constructs a grand palace for them.

This is not the end of Aladdin and Badr’s adventures as the magician returns selling new lamps for old, singing the song “kālā le kar ujlā denā saudā hai qurbānī” (“New lamps for old: I know this transaction is insane”). The narrative again follows the established tale except that before the magician drinks from the poisoned chalice, a device suggested by Aladdin to Badr, two songs are sung, the first a melancholic song of loss by the princess (“zulm duniyā ke sahe aur cup rahem,” “I suffer in silence the injustices of this world”) before Aladdin returns, the second, a courtesan’s song (“ānk me pardā bhar bhar ke,” “Through deluded eyes”), aimed at falsely seducing the magician, and choreographed, in part as a dream sequence in which Badr is trapped in a web with the magician approaching her as a spider. The Bat-Jinn also appears voicing his prophecy of doom and declaring his own release now that the magician is dead. True to the swash-buckling character of Hollywood romance, a sword-fight coda is inserted by Wadia in place of the narrative of the returning brother of the magician in the original tale. Nazim Beg, the erstwhile but ditched lover, has followed Aladdin and Fakruddin and now challenges Aladdin to a fair duel (that is without the help of the magic lamp). Since the magician has placed the palace

atop a waterfall, the sword-fight and related combat take place as a conscious reprise of the final fight in *Lorna Doone* (1951). Nazim Beg dead, the Jinn returns Aladdin, his wife and friends to the city, and Aladdin acknowledges the power of a Mother's prayers, a not uncommon homage to Mothers in Bollywood generally.

At two and a half hours, this is a very well-crafted film even if the special effects are more than a little tardy. Wadia made a good film, technically as good as one gets for its time, but one which also captured the spirit of romance and the song-text in Bollywood. There is quiet homage not only to Indian cinema generally (both silent and sound) but also to Parsi theatre, the traditions of which are evoked in the dialogue, the songs (with their peculiar and idiosyncratic renditions) and the general *mise en scènes*. For Indians, after the film, this *Arabian Nights* fairy tale had been forever transformed and would henceforth be remembered through the Wadia version; indeed, all versions of *Arabian Nights* fantasies (including Wadia's own remake and those produced in Indian regional cinemas) would in a sense be versions of the 1952 film. Two years later Wadia made *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves*, unarguably the almost perfect film in the genre.

ALIBABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES

Indolent but poor, hugely optimistic but invariably simple in his ways, these features define the hero of the "orphan" *Arabian Nights* tales. Alibaba is no exception. Unlike his brother Kasim who marries well and creates a fortune, Alibaba marries poor and remains a pauper. Until, of course, gathering wood for sale as fuel, he chances upon the cave of the forty thieves and memorizes the mantra, yelled by the head robber ("Open, O Simsim"), uttering which he too enters the cave when the thieves have left and discovers a vast fortune in gold and precious stones. He is now rich beyond description, but his envious brother, jealous of Alibaba's fortune, gets from him the secret of the cave and the mantra. Alibaba's brother enters the cave with ten mules to ransack its riches, but upon facing the closed walls of the cave he forgets the mantra, recalling every grain known to him except "simsim" (a variant for "sesame"). He is consequently slaughtered by the returning thieves and his quartered body hung as a warning. The body is recovered by Alibaba who after a 40-day mourning period marries Kasim's widow. Of course, the thieves now seek revenge. The plot's central agent shifts from Alibaba to Alibaba's slave Morgiana who rescues Alibaba from certain death, twice: first by pouring boiling oil on thieves hidden in 37 large barrels (two failed robbers have been punished by the chief and do not figure in the narrative any more), and second when the chief robber, having avoided the fate of his fellows, returns incognito with another plan to kill Alibaba. On this occasion, Morgiana discovers the robber's identity when he declines to eat salt at his host's house, a sure sign that something is amiss, and stabs him to death in a dance she had carefully choreographed with the aid of Abdullah, Alibaba's slave-boy. Gracious to the end, Alibaba asks Kasim's son to marry Morgiana, which he does.

Wadia's version, and for many Indians possibly the version by which this "fairy tale" too is recalled (the version was copied almost frame by frame in the popular 1956 Tamil film, *Alibabavum Narpadhu Thirudargalum*), is a near-perfect *Arabian Nights* fantasy film. Wadia again turned to actors used in *Aladdin*: Mahipal (Alibaba), B.M. Vyas (the Chief Bandit), S.N. Tripathi (Kasim). Shakila, a newcomer, appears

as Marjina (Morgiana). Wadia had done so in *Aladdin*, but here he Indianizes the narrative a little more as he gives the chief of the thieves the very Indian name Abu Hasan Daku (Dacoit), Alibaba's brother is called Kasim Khan and the latter's brother-in-law, the equally treacherous and scheming Sher Khan. As in the original tale, the plot will centre around Marjina and, in common with *Aladdin*, sword-fighting set pieces are inserted throughout.

The first shot of the film is of Marjina as the dancer whom lascivious men desire. Her song is: "dekho jī cānd niklā pīche kajūr ke" ("See how the moon rises behind the date-palm"). Sher Khan is one such man and it is his demand that Marjina dance for his master Kasim Khan (Alibaba's brother and now the Mayor or Governor of the city) that creates the context for an opening sword fight between Alibaba and Sher Khan to save Marjina and her companion Abu, the latter once again Wadia's signature comic sidekick. It appears, and is later confirmed, that Alibaba is something of a misogynist because of Kasim's wife's role in disinheriting him of his father's will. Alibaba lives with his sister Salma and her friend Sitara and all three are joined by Marjina and her dancing companion Abu (the indispensable comic in Wadia's rendition of the genre). Marjina's arrival gradually cleanses Alibaba of his misogyny and they become lovers. In Wadia's version Alibaba is neither indolent nor poor although he is still a wood cutter. And it is the search for fuel that takes Alibaba and his mule to the secret den of the thieves and to the magic mantra "khul jā sam sam" ("Open Sam Sam"). Kasim, Alibaba's brother, gets to know the magic words but Wadia gives Kasim's greed another turn by making him absolutely villainous as not only does he get the secret from Alibaba but condemns him to death. Wadia stages an elaborate scene here. Kasim invites Alibaba, their sister Salma, Marjina, Sitara and Abu to a grand party where a performance is staged with the song "āmk milī hai pyār hogā" ("When eyes meet, love is sure to follow"). In the ensuing bonhomie between brothers, Kasim manages to extract the magic mantra and condemns Alibaba to death. He is saved by Marjina through her dance, and in the fracas that follows Kasim's wife as well as Sher Khan are killed, the latter in an elaborate sword fight with Alibaba. Meanwhile Kasim rides toward the cave followed by Alibaba some considerable distant behind.

In one of the two truly well-crafted scenes in the film, Kasim's greed is shown to be such that he will forget the magic words and be slaughtered by Durjan, the robber chief Abu Hasan's second in command, when the thieves return. His body is retrieved by Alibaba and it is Marjina who gets the tailor Mustafa to sew it together (which he does while singing "siye jā siye jā," "Stitch on, stich on, stich on") for the princely sum of 1,000 gold coins. The tailor is brought to the house blindfolded by Marjina but on his way back he marks the door with a cross. Upon Kasim's death Alibaba is made Sultan (amīr-e-sultanat) and it is his new wealth which convinces Abu Hasan Daku that Alibaba also knows the secret of the cave. This knowledge is confirmed after he encounters the tailor enjoying a dance performance in which the dancer sings "zarā nazare milā lo muskurā lo," "let the eyes meet and let there be a smile" (a fine rendition by the upcoming dancer Helen, whose storied career was initially nurtured by the Wadia brothers). The tailor's confession and his subsequent murder (he is dropped into a cascade of boiling oil) is intercut by a scene in which Marjina tells Alibaba how her parents were murdered by the chieftain Abu Hasan, now the head thief. This is followed by Alibaba's request for Marjina's hand in marriage and a song: "aye sabā un se kaha zarā" ("O breeze tell my beloved").

With Alibaba's secret known, Abu Hasan Daku now comes to Alibaba's house with his drums of oil and seeks his hospitality. Marjina overhears the Chieftain's directive to Durjan (who is inside one of the drums) to come out when he claps three times so that they can kill Alibaba. Marjina then tells Abu and Sitara to push the barrels into the waterfall below (Alibaba's mansion too is perched above a waterfall). Finally, during dinner she asks Alibaba's permission to dance before the Chieftain and the invited guests to which Alibaba agrees, albeit only reluctantly and after threatening to leave her. Marjina dances and sings "šarmā ke lajā ke mair̥ ek jhalak dikhlātā" ("Dispensing with modesty I display for once my beauty"). As the dance and song near an end and she is about to stab the thief stating he is Abu Hasan Daku, killer of her parents and would-be killer of Alibaba too, Alibaba intervenes and asks all the other guests to leave. The thief claps his hands three times but no one comes. When told the fate of all the drums, he escapes with Marjina in his arms to the cave. Alibaba follows on another horse. The final encounter between Abu Hasan Daku and Alibaba, among the finest in the genre, takes place in the cave and ends with the Chieftain falling into the boiling oil beneath the drawbridge. The final shot is of Sitara and Abu singing their song: "calo calo calo ham" ("Let us go together").

In spite of the mandatory song and dance sequences, the film itself maintains a tight structure throughout, which is why many other versions inspired by the 1954 film will follow (one by Wadia himself and others in Indian regional languages such as the Tamil already mentioned and the Telegu *Alibaba 40 Dongalu* [1970]) but none will match the original. Here too the fairy tale enters modern Indian cultural imaginary via the Homi Wadia version.

HATIM TAI

The success of *Aladdin* and *Alibaba* persuaded Wadia to offer a tale that was part of many Arabic-Persian legends but did not have an established or definitive source text. This tale is "Hatim Tai," a story about a legendary knight of sixth century pre-Islamic Arabia, regarded as the exemplary figure of boundless generosity. Hatim Tai is mentioned in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981: 152), where the boatman's name is also Tai, and is referred to again in *Shame* (1983: 33) as a "legendary adventurer." In Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Day 10, Story 3) he is Natan, a generous commoner whose liberality offends the king so much that he wants him executed. On hearing this Natan freely gives himself up, an act that persuades the king to pardon him. Hatim Tai is also mentioned in the Persian poet Saadi's *Bostan* (1257) and *Gulistan* (1259). The *Arabian Nights* makes only a passing reference to the story in Nights 270 and 271 of the Malcolm Lyons edition (Lyons 2010: I: 884–5). He is the hero of the Persian romance *Kissa-i Hātīm Tā'ī* which was translated into Urdu as *Arā'ish-i mahfil* and into English by Duncan Forbes as *The Adventures of Hatim Tai, Romance* (1850). In its Persian rendition Hatim Tai emerges as a Prince of Yaman (Yemen), a believer and an early convert to Islam. It is this Persian text and its received variants as parallel texts circulating in multiple storytelling networks that is the source for Homi Wadia's *Hatim Tai* (1956).

Although the Hatim Tai story is not part of the *Arabian Nights* canon (certainly not the published canon) Homi Wadia's film transforms it into a seemingly *Arabian Nights* narrative in the Indian fairy-tale imaginary. When J.B.H. Wadia turned to

the *qissā-dāstān* traditions of Parsi theatre to write the screen-play and scenario of *Hatim Tai* (as he had done for the two Homi Wadia *Arabian Nights* fantasies), his sources were the Persian Hatim Tai adventures (in Urdu and English) embellished as these had been by Parsi theatre as well the many cinematic versions: the 1929 silent version, and the 1933 and 1947 talkie versions (the former released in four instalments). The argument that may be made here is that it is through cinema that *Hatim Tai* enters the received Indian canon of the *Arabian Nights* (where it does not find a proper place initially) and it is Homi Wadia who made this possible. And since Wadia wished to construct his tale as an *Arabian Nights* fantasy, he went to the *Arabian Nights* archive to ransack it freely. No tale is more important here than “The Tale of Julnar the Sea-born” (Burton 2016: 631–65) and “The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor,” the latter made into a Bollywood film in 1953.

The Persian story as translated by Forbes begins with Hatim Tai, a Yemeni Prince, who agrees to find answers to seven questions/statements/requests so that Husna Banu, daughter of a merchant of Burzakh in the care of the King of Kharasan since the untimely death of her father, can marry the Assyrian Prince Munir Shah. The seven riddles are actually posed by Husna Banu’s companion nurse and they are:

What I saw once I long for a second time.
Do good, and cast it upon the waters.
Do no evil; if you do, such shall you meet with.
He who speaks the truth is always tranquil.
Let him bring an account of the mountain of Nida.
Let him procure a pearl the size of a duck’s egg.
Let him bring an account of the bath of Badgard.

These questions readily fall within the conventions of a quest myth where the quest itself provides the structure of the narrative. In the classic quest tales, the question often takes the form of a question that has no answer or one where the answer is located in the question itself. Hatim Tai, our noble hero, takes on the challenge and gradually finds the answers to all the questions. In the Persian version, he is after all a believer, a champion of the new faith, and renowned for his generosity. To illustrate this, we are told in the Prologue the tale of the ambassador who is sent by the Greek Emperor to ask Hatim Tai for his favorite horse. Hatim Tai finds that he has no meat for the ambassador and his entourage and, unaware that the ambassador had come with a request for the horse, he kills his favorite horse to feed the ambassador and his retinue. The Persian tale is long and convoluted as the answer of each question is framed by numerous fantastic events and stories within stories. There will be speaking wolves, jackals, bears, dragons, nymphs, mermaids, parrots, griffins, enchanted damsels together with fairies from Peristan, the land of fairies, the latter also used in Salman Rushdie’s post-apocalypse novel *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015).

In Homi Wadia’s film the questions, given in Urdu, are the same, as are the names of the chief characters, but the narrative undergoes a “filmic” *Arabian Nights* conversion in the sense that the mode of representation is that adopted by Wadia for the earlier *Arabian Nights* fantasies. In the Wadia film, Hatim Tai comes to a city divided between rich and poor where he freely distributes food, clothes and money.

A fistful of coins thrown at a dejected beggar is immediately rejected and Hatim Tai's own goodness questioned because no one can bring happiness to this miserable man. Behind his dejection is a tale of woe as he is in fact one Munir Shah (here Shami), a prince, who is unable to marry his beloved Husna Bano because of a terrible curse. In a flashback, we are shown the first meeting of Husna Bano and Munir Shami which is also an occasion for Wadia to show his signature sword-fight sequences by his favorite waterfall. The film then moves chronologically as Prince Munir Shami takes Hatim Tai to the mansion of Husna Bano's father, the merchant Bardoz. At this point Hatim Tai's comic sidekick, one Nusroo Dhobi ("Nusroo the Laundryman," a name which adds a Parsi touch as Parsi surnames often carry the professions of their owner), is introduced as his indispensable ally who, curiously enough, is given the largest number of dramatic lines.

Husna Bano's father Bardoz then narrates the curse given to him by a passing fairy, who had inadvertently entered his large bedroom. "Yah ek raṅgīn dāstān hai sunogēn to maḥsūs karogē" ("This is a colourful story, you'd understand when you've heard it"), he says. He goes on to recount that in a moment of frenzied passion, he had turned the fairy named Gulnar Pari, a Parizad (that is, of the family of paris or fairies as opposed to human or Adamzad) to stone by touching her. Prior to expiring, the fairy had delivered the following curse: "When your child marries she too will turn into stone." The questions posed by Husna Bano's nurse are here repeated by the merchant Bardoz himself and Hatim Tai declares that he will lift the curse by answering all the questions and in doing so affirm his legendary standing as the epitome of goodness and righteousness. After this prelude, the film proper begins with Hatim Tai and his comic sidekick Nusroo Dhobi embarking on their quest.

As cinema, the Wadia film uses many of the Islamicate conventions or allusions that had made their way into the Wadia brothers' earlier films, both silent and talkie. Of special note is their first talkie, *Lal-e-Yaman* (1933) in which the usual dynastic squabble over the right to rule and the invidious ambitions of a younger queen merges into a parallel narrative about a pari, a talking parrot and a Jinn with magical powers and a heart located in a flower. Even as this parallel narrative draws on the conventions of the *Arabian Nights* (Thomas 2013), it responds to the cultural interests of its ideal spectators, here both Muslim and Hindu, through conventions that draw on Sufi romances such as Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavat* (1540), now made into a spectacular film by Sanjay Leela Bhansali (2018), which also figured a talking parrot and the idioms of the earlier Persian *qissā-dāstāns*. In the case of Wadia's *Hatim Tai* too at every point in the quest, the *Arabian Nights* conventions and narrative fragments are not only Indianized but coded within a secular-religious ideology.

The solution to the first question takes Hatim Tai to the land of jalparis (as found in the *Arabian Nights*' "The Tale of Julnar the Sea-born") where he is subjected to the seductive guiles of the queen of the mermaids and her companions indicated by a heavily choreographed song "ā dil se dil milā le" ("Now come join our hearts together"). Hatim Tai, although drugged, resists seduction, and with his companion Nusroo Dhobi escapes only to find that what he had escaped from was sexual desire as a destructive force: *havas*, desire, is an unquenchable thirst that destroys the thirsty. As the tale proceeds and the questions are progressively answered, Hatim Tai will find a love interest in Gulnar Pari's sister Husna Pari with whom he'll sing a catchy romantic song: "ye nazar chīn kar le gayī karār" ("This glance of yours has

stolen my peace of mind”). And this fairy princess too will have to burn her wings so as to become an Adamzad, a child of Adam. There will be anecdotal narratives, a dacoit who turns toward goodness (task 2: do good), and a woman transformed into a human with simian features whose features return to normal once Hatim Tai has sucked her poisonous blood (task 3: do no evil). Hatim Tai’s sense of truth even makes God give a child his sight back (task 4: he who speaks the truth) after his hymnodic plea “parvar digār-e-ālam terā hī hai sahārā” (“O lord of the universe, you are our only hope”). This latter episode, in typical *Arabian Nights* style, occurs in an other-worldly space, the space of the Parizad where Husna Pari’s father is disturbed because his daughter wishes to marry Hatim Tai. The fifth task takes Hatim Tai to the mountain of Nida where a Jinn (a version of King Kong) terrorizes the tribal villagers with regular demands for a human sacrifice. Hatim Tai kills the Jinn, which explains the secret of the mountain.

The final two tasks centre on the magician Kamlaq who owns a large pearl, here even larger than a duck’s egg. This pearl sees everything and gives its owner power over all other kinds of magic. Hatim Tai destroys the pearl (the sixth task) and discovers the secret of Badgard that Kamlaq’s own soul resides in the body of a parrot – another iteration of the story of the Jinn imprisoned in a parrot’s body. After a lengthy struggle with the evil magician, Hatim Tai kills the parrot and with it the magician dies too. The seventh task complete, the quest comes to an end. Back in the merchant’s house Gulnar Pari’s life is fully restored (her body had progressively come to life as each question was answered); the merchant’s daughter marries Prince Munir Shami, and Hatim Tai marries Husna Pari, now that her wings have been burnt. As in the foundational *Lal-e-Yaman*, echoes of the key opening sūrah in the Qur’ān (“In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful”) frame the end of the film.

In her brilliant book Rosie Thomas points to the role of the *Arabian Nights* fantasy films in establishing a cinematic cosmopolitanism and an Indian modernity in as much as the tales themselves circulated as a world text, a “transcultural creative work” (2013: 35) in both print and image. Thomas points to anecdotal evidence which suggests that long before Phalke, one Hiralal Sen, a Calcutta-based photographer, had made a film version of *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves* (c.1903). Even if this were not true – historical evidence is missing as Hiralal Sen’s archive went up in flames in 1917 – the fact remains that the filmic renditions of the *Arabian Nights* were a crucial component of the visual imaginary of the Indian. The first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara* (1931) used the narrative conventions of the *Arabian Nights* as did the Wadia brothers’ own *Lal-e-Yaman*. Such was the mesmeric power of these tales that, as in the case of *Hatim Tai*, Islamicate romances were transformed into this genre. The pervasiveness of the *Arabian Nights* filmic form does not stop there as the great Hindu epics themselves went through the mill of the *Arabian Nights* fantasies. Nowhere is this more marked than in Homi Wadia’s own rendition of the *Rāmāyana* (*Sampoorna Ramayan*, 1962) where the connections between his rendition of the great religious epic and *Arabian Nights* fantasy films are readily recognizable. The story of Rama, in Wadia’s hands, follows the traditional script but the film itself is created with modes of representation (Hanuman as the Jinn in flight, Ravana as the evil magician, Rama as an *Arabian Nights* hero) straight out of the Wadia *Arabian Nights* fantasies. Homi Wadia, more than anyone else, embedded the *Arabian Nights* fairy tales into the Indian popular imagination.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

FAIRY TALES IN CHINA

An ongoing evolution



Juwen Zhang

The ‘fairy tale’ (*tonghua* 童话: children’s story) in China, like a genie let out of a bottle, has been undergoing a metamorphosis for the past 100 years and is still changing. It offers a further illustration of scholars’ perception that all attempts to define fairy tale as a genre have been “irrelevant” (Ben-Amos 1971: 4) and have “failed” (Zipes 2011: 222). By examining the emergence of *tonghua* in China, this chapter will argue that: 1) *tonghua* (as a term and as a new type of literature) are manufactured as a means to achieve certain ends, namely a discourse with the West and the revitalization of China’s own tradition; 2) this process reflects the syncretic and self-healing mechanism that is essential to the continuity of Chinese traditions, despite the impact of colonialism and imperialism (Zhang 2017: 200); and 3) a tale’s vitality lies in its reflection of core beliefs and cultural values.

A METAMORPHOSIS FROM EUROPE TO CHINA

The birth of the fairy tale in Europe constitutes an indispensable background for understanding its transformation in China. A recent re-evaluation of the Italian invention of the form by G.F. Straparola (ca. 1485–1558) suggests that his tales also influenced the origin of fairy tales in France (Bottigheimer 2002, 2012). This view, however, has been challenged on the basis that the “wonder tale” existed “long before Straparola’s time” in Europe (Ben-Amos 2010: 426), and his tales do not contain many motifs that are now known to be characteristic of fairy tales (Vaz da Silva 2010: 398, 419). Indeed, although the Italian and French writers may have institutionalized what we call the fairy tale in the Western world, which in turn had an influence on Middle Eastern and Asian versions of the fairy tale, it is clear that the origins of the fairy tale can be traced back further to the oral traditions of Ancient Asian, Ancient Egyptian, and classical Greco-Roman times (Zipes 2015: xxi). In this regard, the influence of the French term, *conte de fées*, upon other languages, needs to be examined first at semantic level and then at ideological level.

The formation of *contes de fées* in the 1690s in France and the subsequent English circulation of ‘fairy tales’ after the 1750s happened within particular social and religious contexts: these stories were often created by women (of certain social class) as

“their resistance to the conditions under which they lived” (Zipes 2011: 224). Yet, that such an esoteric practice became a widespread movement in Europe shows that there are deeper and broader reasons for the continuing growth of fairy tales, first in Europe, then beyond. These reasons include: The Reformation in the sixteenth century; the social and familial suppression of women in Europe; concepts of Nationalism from Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803); and the British Industrial Revolution from the 1750s to the 1840s, which led directly to the peak of colonialization and imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As a result, even though the French continued developing their *contes de fées*, the Germans their *Märchen*, and the Danish their *eventyr*, it was the English term – fairy tales – that embodied the semantic and ideological meanings and functions, along with the concepts of ‘folklore’ and ‘nationalism,’ that, in the early part of the twentieth century, attracted China’s attention.

It was an unprecedented period in Chinese history that witnessed the European powers scrambling for China with their opium and cannons; the collapse of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and, with it, the end of 2,000 years of the dynastic system of government; the establishment of the Republic of China (1912); and the subsequent New Culture Movement to westernize (or modernize) China (1910s–1930s). To rescue China from being fully colonized and subjugated and to seek independence and modernity, Chinese elites found that *nationalism*, along with *folklore* as its expression (certainly including *tonghua*), could be the catalyst needed to awaken the National Spirit (*minzu jingshen*).

We shall first discuss the Chinese term for the ‘fairy tale.’ Both ‘*fée*’ and ‘fairy’ represent a particular image of a female, perhaps with angel-like wings, in a forest; both ‘*fée*’ and ‘fairy’ emerged during Medieval Europe and were/are applied to stories directed at both adults and children. *Märchen* broadly means tales or mythical stories, and *eventyr* refers primarily to adventure stories, although both include stories for children. The closest Chinese term to ‘fairy’ is ‘*xian*’ (仙, immortals; a Daoist concept), and tales featuring ‘*xian*’ as a ‘genre’ flourished in the third century in China. The term ‘*gushi*’ (故事) is the closest to the German and Danish terms for ‘stories’ or ‘tales.’ Nevertheless, the new form was named ‘*tonghua*,’ literarily, children’s story/stories.

The naming process involves not only a decision concerning what a story should be about, but also a choice as to what it may be used for beyond direct readers, i.e. part of an ideological process that goes beyond literary forms. *Tonghua* was precisely created for this purpose. Interestingly, the Chinese characters for *tonghua*, along with *minsu* (folklore), were directly borrowed from the Japanese. In fact, ‘folklore’ was first translated as *mijian wenxue* (folk literature) and *minxue* (folk/people studies). It was only later that the term *minsu* prevailed. This conceptual struggle about the definition and categorization of these terms is still seen today among disciplinary divisions in China.

In 1909, *tonghua* was first used in China as the title of a series of publications, edited by Sun Yuxiu (1871–1922), in which European fairy tales or *Märchen* were offered as examples. Sun thus created a new category in publications and library categorization. Today he is heralded as the father of “Chinese *tonghua*” (Chen 1984; Wang 2009). His ultimate goal was to promote “child education,” as had other intellectuals and writers such as Zhou Zuoren (1885–1967), who was responsible

for introducing the term *minsu* to China (1913) and who translated fairy tales by Oscar Wilde, Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, and other authors in the 1910s. By the 1920s, *tonghua* became widely accepted as a new genre of literature (i.e. folk literature). It also aided the extensive New Culture Movement (Li 2014: 123) by arousing the awareness of Chinese folk literature. In particular, *tonghua* authored by Chinese writers began to be accepted and welcomed by society, which marked its taking root in China.

Clearly, it was because *tong* meant child or children that it was chosen to become part of the Chinese term for ‘fairy tale’ (‘*tonghua*’) and ‘*Märchen*,’ rather than ‘*xian*,’ the third century Daoist term meaning ‘immortals’ (Liu 1985: 6, Wu 1992: 4); while *hua* meant speech or telling. Thus, *tonghua* was created to promote a social and political agenda, but it also led to an ongoing conceptual struggle.

A CENTURY OF TRANSFORMATION

A study of the developmental stages of this literary form (Wu 1992, 2007) will enlighten us about the ideological and social changes, as well as disciplinary transformations in China:

- 1 **1900s–1920s: Sinification** (i.e. transforming the Western fairy tale into Chinese *tonghua*). In addition to translating fairy tales or *Märchen*, Chinese authors also began to write *tonghua*. In form, they imitated European fairy tales; in content, they broadly adapted traditional Chinese myths, legends, and folktales. Beijing University intellectuals and writers launched the ‘ballads movement’ (*geyao yundong*; collecting folk ballads/songs) all over China, which enabled the birth of folklore studies in China. *Tonghua*, along with ‘folklore,’ became a revolutionary tool for both domestic and international discourses. The publication of the best known indigenous *tonghua*, *The Strawman* (*Daocaoren*, 1922) by Ye Shengtao (1894–1988), marked the first success of Sinification, even though the influence of Andersen’s “The Hardy Tin Soldier” was obvious. The first use of the term *minjian tonghua* (folk *tonghua*) in 1927 was to differentiate the newly authored tales from anonymous traditional tales (Liu 1985: 6). (The use of ‘fairy tale’ and ‘literary fairy tale’ or ‘folk fairy tale’ in English is a separate issue; see Zipes 2015: xxi; Hanks 2003: 63–4, ft. 5.)
- 2 **1930s–40s: Politicization**. With World War II, the Sino–Japanese Wars, and the Civil War in China, political campaigns for ‘national independence’ were the priority for Chinese writers and folklorists. The most representative *tonghua* written during this period is *Dalin and Xiaolin* by Zhang Tianyi (1906–1985). The story is about twin brothers who represent dualities: laziness and diligence, cowardice and bravery, and the ruling and working class; they thus depict both individual and social problems that are still seen as relevant. This tale, although obviously influenced by the Brothers Grimm, is considered a twentieth-century classic, marking the maturity of *tonghua* in China (Li 2014: 129–30).
- 3 **1950s: *Tonghua* for education**. In the early stages of the People’s Republic of China (since 1949), social and cultural reconstruction, along with economic rebuilding, became the goal of literary workers, i.e. to serve the working class by creating literature for the working class. As a result, the ‘common people’ were

praised as the ‘masters of society’ and all kinds of folktales, known to originate from the common people, enjoyed a boost in collection and publication; they were also used as effective ways of propagandizing the new ideology in a New China. This was a flourishing time for writers of *tonghua*. Yan Wenjing (1915–2005) being the most representative among them. His “Dingding’s Wonder Trip” (1949), “Earthworm and Bee” (1950), and “Three Proud Cats” (1954) are still highly regarded.

- 4 **Early 1960s: New *Tonghua*.** Writing new *tonghua* became the political task for Chinese writers. Traditional Chinese myths, legends, and tales in general were adapted and re-created as new *tonghua* in order to promote the new political agenda.
- 5 **1966–1976 (Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution): Disappearing.** During this extreme political movement, folk literature – or anything that praised ‘the masses’ or ‘working classes’ – was preserved and developed. Folk *tonghua* were promoted as a means to educate the masses. In contrast, *tonghua* by the intellectuals and educated elite began to be seen as bourgeois and, thus, had to be wiped out.
- 6 **1980s–1990s: Artistification and literaturization.** During this recovery period, *tonghua* as a ‘genre’ began to be transformed into ‘high literature,’ and was increasingly distanced from its previous identification as folk literature. In the 1980s, Folkloristics in China was revived and had to re-establish its relationship with folk literature. At the same time, the ‘searching for roots’ (*xungen*) literature and thought movement began to reconstruct Chinese cultural identity at both the national and international levels; this movement influenced all cultural products, such as film, poetry, fiction, music, and language. Conflicting ideas of ‘Westernization,’ ‘post-modernity,’ ‘globalization,’ and ‘traditionality’ complicated the proper placement of *tonghua* in the cultural scene.
- 7 **2000s–2010s: A consumer culture, merging into the global market.** One distinctive feature of this period is the transformation of *tonghua*, both oral and written, into various multimedia cultural forms. At the present time, *tonghua* faces yet another transformation and categorization. Whether it is defined as ‘Literature,’ as ‘Folk Literature,’ as ‘Folkloristics,’ or as ‘Folk Narrative,’ we must transcend disciplinary boundaries in order to understand the mechanisms of its transmission and transformation and the way in which it functions to heal diverse strains in Chinese cultural identity.

QUESTIONS OF DEFINITION AND CATEGORIZATION TODAY

As outlined above, *tonghua* have evolved over the past 100 years. Attempts to define or redefine them, modify their content, and re-categorize them have led to confusion in academia, while, at the same time, there has been a greater acceptance of them in popular culture. Looking at the situation of *tonghua* today, we find that: 1) within high literature (versus folk literature), there is a debate about the relationship between ‘*tonghua* literature’ (which includes the ‘fairy tale’ or ‘fantasy tale,’ but whose content is not only about ‘children’) and ‘children’s literature’ (whose content

is limited to that which is appropriate for children); 2) within folk literature, there is a debate about the distinctions between ‘*tonghua*’ and ‘folk *tonghua*’; and 3) within Folkloristics, a debate about the distinctions between ‘narrative’ and ‘folk narrative,’ both having *tonghua* as a sub-category. The differing concepts of *tonghua* among these three ‘fields’ make it difficult for ‘*tonghua*’ to gain academic status and for scholars to obtain resources for research in China. However, the genie’s shadows continue spreading in popular and folk culture without those concerns.

In the field of ‘high literature,’ *tonghua* has gained a stable position as ‘children’s literature’ and is recognized in a section of the China Writers Association, the highest national organization under the central government. The first attempts to write a disciplinary history of *tonghua* resulted in two monographs (Jin 1992, Wu 1992), which affirmed an academic status that *tonghua* had never before had. In addition, ‘*tonghua* writers’ have formed a professional group, most of the members of which were born in the 1950s. This group is becoming increasingly better recognized in China and abroad. The best-known representative of this group is Cao Wenxuan, Professor of Chinese Literature at Beijing University, who was honored by being given the Hans Christian Andersen Award by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in 2016.

In the field of ‘folk literature,’ *tonghua* is treated with great confusion, although the term has been widely known. In authoritative textbooks for the past 30 years, folktale, myth, folk legend, and folk ballad are categorized as four parallel genres. Under ‘folktale,’ there are four sub-genres: fantasy tale (*huanxiang gushi*), everyday life tale, folk fable, and folk joke. *Tonghua* is treated as an alias of fantasy tale (Zhong 1980: 204). Furthermore, the distinction between *tonghua* and *folk tonghua* is drawn clearly here in order to distinguish a large amount of ‘folktales’ from high literature *tonghua*.

Folkloristics, by contrast, attempts to blur the boundaries between high literature and folk literature, between *tonghua* and *folk tonghua*, and between *tonghua* and other types of ‘stories’ (*gushi*), by promoting the concept of ‘folk narrative.’ In an influential textbook, ‘oral prose narrative’ has replaced ‘folk oral literature’ with three sub-categories: myth; legend; and folktale and joke (within ‘folktale,’ one branch is ‘fantasy tale,’ also called ‘wonder tale’ (*shenqi gushi*), ‘magic tale’ (*mofa gushi*), or ‘folk *tonghua*’) (Zhong 2009: 247). In the rising field of ‘folk culture studies,’ however, *tonghua* is categorized as follows: everyday life tale, folk fable, folk joke, fantasy tale, and *folk tonghua* are all sub-types of ‘folktale’ (Wan 2010: 264).

‘Folk narrative,’ as an emerging concept, has achieved more widespread recognition because of its inclusiveness. In the *New Introduction to Folkloristics* (Xing 2016), ‘folk narrative’ has replaced ‘folk literature.’ This is a development of recent scholarly efforts: folk narrative is not only used to blur the traditional ‘genres,’ but also to emphasize a broader communicative context (Lü and An 2006; Lin 2007, 2012; Liu 2010).

In reality, however, the academic ‘genre’ of *tonghua* has already been broken down by those who originally created it. For example, in an English publication, *Fairy Tales of Chinese Nationalities*, edited by Jingwen Zhong (1991), who is hailed as the father of Chinese folkloristics, the following four ‘fairy tales’ are included: “The Cowherd and the Weaving Girl,” “Meng Jiang Nü,” “The Butterfly Lovers,” and “The Legend of the White Snake.” These four tales are acknowledged to be China’s most popular ‘legends,’ ‘myths,’ ‘wonder tales,’ or ‘fantasy tales.’ Clearly, they may be considered to be *tonghua* or ‘fairy tale’ in Western discourse, but they are better known, in Chinese

discourse, as ‘shenhua’ (gods’ stories; myth) or ‘chuanshuo’ (passing-the-telling; another awkward transplant of the Western legend). The ‘genre’ of *tonghua* provides a means of discourse beyond the study of fairy tale, that is, it reflects a desire for the Chinese to keep abreast with the West in search of an equal ‘national’ status and equal discourse in the world. In this sense, the production of *tonghua* in China is not different from the production of *Märchen* in Europe.

Thus far, two facts have become clear:

- 1 The *tonghua* ‘genre,’ from the very beginning, is culturally distinctive and is more than simply the ‘form’ it claims to be; it is, rather, a matter of the right and power of discourse. *Tonghua* in China has further proved what Ben-Amos points out: that “the categorization of prose narrative into different genres depends largely upon the cultural attitude toward the tales and the indigenous taxonomy of oral tradition” (1971: 4). As Ben-Amos elaborates:

Thus, in the process of diffusion from one culture to another, tales may also cross narrative categories; and the same story may be myth for one group and *Märchen* for another. In that case the question of the actual generic classification of the tale is irrelevant, since it does not depend on any autonomous or intrinsic features but rather on the cultural attitude toward it.

(1971: 4)

Zipes concludes similarly: “Almost all endeavors by scholars to define the fairy tale as a genre have failed. Their failure is predictable because the genre is so volatile and fluid” (2011: 222).

- 2 The transformation of *tonghua* reveals the strategic use of the term ‘genre’ in discourse with the *Other* and demonstrates the operation of the inherent mechanism of cultural syncretism, transmission, and self-healing in the continuity of Chinese culture as a whole.

BEYOND GENRE: BELIEFS AND VALUES

The issue of defining genre is superficial. The essential matter is, however, the core beliefs and cultural values embodied in stories regardless of how they are categorized. *Tonghua* in China reaffirms this point. Indeed, the fairy tale or *tonghua* is itself a belief, as Zipes points out: “Fairy Tale signifies belief in the supernatural, not the suspension of belief. We all believe in the extra-ordinary of Once Upon a Time. We need to believe. We all dream and breathe through our tales” (2011: 221). However, to pursue this further, one needs to examine how such a belief, functioning as a means of communication and a process of meaning-making, reveals different belief systems and cultural values in different cultures, and how they operate in cross-cultural communication. The following three questions are necessary to understand *tonghua* beyond the limitations of its ‘genre’:

- 1 What particular Chinese beliefs and cultural values are embodied in tales in general or *tonghua* in particular and how are they different from those of the West?

The answer is two-fold and depends upon a synchronic view of today's Western and Chinese cultures and a diachronic view of the continuity of Chinese culture as a whole for the past three millennia, at least since the time of the Shang Dynasty's Oracle Bone Inscriptions (sixteenth century BCE). In short, ancient China's animistic cosmos developed polytheist practices, which were characteristically all-inclusive and syncretic; monotheism, however, which was characteristically exclusive, became the dominant worldview in Judeo-Christian Western culture. As a result, in order to satisfy the variety of different beliefs, Chinese culture contains a large number of stories about all kind of gods, spirits, ghosts, and immortals. This inclusiveness is essential to the continuity of Chinese culture as a 'diversity within unity,' which is expressed in these core beliefs and cultural values: 1) the immortality of the soul; 2) the unity of man and nature; 3) the Confucian idea of 'Great Unity'; 4) the ethics of following local customs; 5) the emphasis of harmony in diversity; 6) the search for auspiciousness and the avoidance of inauspiciousness through the practice of fortunetelling (Zhang 2014, 2017). The integrating forces among these core beliefs are Confucian family values and the Daoist idea of immortality, which together result in 'harmonization in diversity' (*he er bu tong*) in everyday practices. Renaming is one of these practical strategies to maintain inclusiveness and harmony, as seen in the use of *tonghua*.

- 2 How do *tonghua*, or folk narratives in a broad sense, reflect continuity and self-healing mechanisms in Chinese culture? Renaming genres is one of the mechanisms by which 'old' ideas can be reaffirmed through 'new' forms. For the Chinese, as long as the core beliefs and values remain unchanged (e.g. in a tale), other names or elements of the 'form' may be easily substituted. Such an example is evident in the folktale of the "Predestined Wife" (Mt. 930*/ATU 930A), on which Archer Taylor (1958) conducted a seminal historic-geographic study. Here is a summary of the tale:

A young man named Wei-Ku wishes to marry, but searches in vain for a suitable wife. He encounters an old man reading a book in a strange script. The young man can read foreign languages, including Sanskrit, but cannot read this script and asks what it is. He is told that it is the script of the underworld, and that the book is a list of fated marriages. The young man asks whether he will marry the girl he is interested in, and the ancient man tells him that he will not, but that his foot is already bound to the foot of his future wife by a red cord. The girl is now only three years old. The old man takes the youth to see this child, but the youth is dissatisfied because she seems very ugly and is apparently of low station. He decides to kill the little girl and so escape his destiny and sends a slave with a knife. The slave succeeds only in slashing her forehead. Fourteen years later, the young man has become an official. He marries a beautiful upper-class girl, who always wears a beauty mark on her forehead. After they have been married a year or more, she tells him how she was wounded by a madman when she was little girl. Then the husband explains it all to her. They live happily ever after. The shop where the young man first met the old man came to be known as the "Fix-Marriage [Engagement] Shop."

(Taylor 1959: 45)

Among the key motifs in the tale is the match-maker (or “Moon Man”), who can easily be identified as a Buddhist monk who reads Sanskrit. For this reason, the tale is seen as an import from India from around the ninth century. Taking a closer look, however, we find that this tale has several different names and prototypes in various Chinese stories dating back to the fifth century BCE (Zhang 2014), which proves Briggs’s view that a written text is not necessarily identical to any oral version of the tale (1993: 387). Today, the “Predestined Wife” is alive not only in oral re-telling, but as part of the practices of everyday life (e.g. temple events, marriages, festivals, gift-giving, films, songs, and poems), because the tale is rooted in the fundamental beliefs and values of Chinese culture. This example demonstrates that, whether or not a tale – or elements of a tale – is adapted to a new time and place, its categorization should not be restricted by its original genre classification or motifs. Any adaption of a tale or its elements must be based on existing similar motifs or elements; and such adaptation must be used to invigorate or reenergize the core beliefs and values of the tradition.

- 3 What conclusion can be drawn by merging the above two questions? *Tonghua* were not meant to transplant European ‘fairy tales’ to Chinese culture; they were, rather, a means to awaken the cultural self-awareness and self-confidence of the Chinese, especially at a time when, as a result of the disdain shown them by the invading colonial and imperial powers, they had internalized the mentality of being ‘inferior.’

Historically, the transformation of all kinds of tales in China also demonstrates what mechanisms are involved in the transmission of Chinese traditions. In addition to the example discussed above (ATU 930A), let us look at *Yexian* (ATU 510A), an ancient Chinese folktale that superficially resembles “Cinderella,” to demonstrate the continuity and vitality of *tonghua* in everyday life. While there is a complete translation by Waley (1963: 147–62), here is a summary of the Chinese version (about 770 characters):

The people of the South tell a story from about a thousand years ago. A chief had two wives, but one died and left a daughter named Yexian. She was loved by her father, but he died only a few years later. Her stepmother was mean to her. Once Yexian caught a tiny fish and kept it in a bowl. It then grew bigger. Eventually she had to put it into a pond. The fish would show its head to Yexian when she came, but never to other people. The stepmother tricked Yexian to get her out of the way, put on her clothes, hid a knife, and walked to the pond. The fish showed its head. By now it was very big. She killed the fish, ate the meat, and buried the bones. When Yexian came back and found no fish, she wailed with grief. Suddenly, a man appeared and told her, “Your mother killed the fish and the bones are under the dung. Get the bones and hide them in your room. They will make every wish you make come true.” She followed his instructions and got beautiful clothes and delicious food. Then it was time for a fair. The stepmother went to the fair, but asked Yexian to work at home. Nevertheless Yexian attended in secret with her feather-clothes and gold-shoes. When she was almost recognized by her stepsister and stepmother, she ran away in a hurry and lost one shoe. The shoe eventually was presented to the king. He asked the people around to try it on, but no one could make it fit. It was as light as down and made no

noise even when walking on stone. The king then ordered every woman to try it on. Finally, Yexian was found, and the shoe fit her. The king then brought her and the fish bones back to his court, and made her his chief wife. She was as beautiful as a fairy. The stepmother and stepsister were later struck to death by flying stones. One year, the king asked the fish bones for too much treasure, and his wishes were not fulfilled. He then buried the fish bones along with enormous wealth on the seashore. But when he needed the treasure to suppress a rebellion, everything had been washed away the night before.

Yexian was categorized as *zhiguai* (志怪, strange/wonder/ghost story) in the ninth century book *Youyang zazu* (*The Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*) by Duan Chengshi (803–863). *Zhiguai* is a 2,000-year-old well-known ‘genre’ in literature that matured and gained popularity in the ninth century. Furthermore, *zhiguai* were categorized in Duan’s *nuogao* chapter, a Daoist term for summoning ghosts and spirits. The term was first used in a text from the fourth century *Baopuzi* (*Book of the Master who Embraces Simplicity*) by Ge Hong (284–364), possibly at the beginning of a séance. Thus, this tale had its own ‘genre’ for a long time before it was relabeled as *tonghua*.

The three key motifs in *Yexian* are: magic fish; festivals (or fairs); and shoe-for-marriage (Liu 2012: 212). The first shows fish-worship among the people who live on fishing (in contemporary Guangxi, China, and Vietnam), a belief shaped by the mode of production and the geographic conditions of this group of people. This version of the practice of worshipping fish is not seen in other regions (Ting 1974), but versions that are modified to accord with local beliefs and values do appear in other regions. The second motif – festivals – also reveals a particular aspect of social life that is still celebrated in Guangxi, Southwest China, and Northern Vietnam; this particular festival is known as *nongdong*, or song-fair, and was mentioned in the original ninth century text. The third motif exhibits unique Chinese cultural symbolism: the homophonous relationship between ‘shoe’ and ‘harmony’ (same pronunciation, *xie*; different characters). The symbolic relationship between shoe and marriage is also seen in weddings in many regions in China. Thus, these are ‘tales’ that cannot be separated from real life (Beauchamp 2010).

What is of particular interest in *Yexian* is the belief that the fish bone is a representation of the immortality of the soul, which is often seen in the practice of secondary burial. Because of this belief, the tale and the practice it reflects are still alive today in Guangxi where *Yexian* originated. In contrast, when “Cinderella” loses its specific cultural connection to a particular region or group of people, it also loses its connection with current beliefs and enters the world of wonder as a generic expression of the aspiration of girls to ‘marry up’ (Zipes 2011). Thus, equating “Cinderella” and *Yexian* (Li 2016: 201) is not culturally meaningful, even though they are both labelled ATU 510A. Cinderella is alive in the wonder-world of books and films (e.g. the Disney versions in 1922, 1950, 2015), but operates distinctly in the world of belief. The story in the *Year of the Fish*, a film directed by David Kaplan in 2007, arguably reinterprets the narrative in light of the Mexican tradition; but at the same time, *Yexian* is alive in a particular region where local beliefs, values, and lifestyle are reinforced through the tale.

In summary, the above three culturally distinctive questions have illustrated how various cultural mechanisms are used in Chinese tales to perpetuate their

transmission and transformation. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example, the Chinese went through a cultural trauma, losing their self-awareness and self-confidence in facing the colonial and imperial powers, and even internalizing feelings of inferiority as a colonial effect. However, deep in the Chinese tradition, those core beliefs and values continued through traditional tales; the hardship of life was relieved with tales that maintained a sense of cultural ‘roots.’ This proves the cultural self-healing mechanism in Chinese history: whether China was ruled by non-Chinese, divided between the European and Japanese powers, or riven by internal chaos, the maintenance of beliefs and values by the common people through everyday folklore practices activated a self-healing mechanism whenever socio-economic conditions allowed (Zhang 2017). The metamorphosis of *tonghua* (or folklore in the broad sense) in China provides a precise example of this; it operates as a narrative form that enables the negotiation of cultural expressions to accommodate ideological differences, it reflects discourse at different levels, and it sustains its identity over time, while simultaneously regaining and rejuvenating its cultural vitality.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when China suffered under the domination of Western colonial and imperial powers, the Chinese were forced to adapt to Western ideas and concepts in order to establish discourse with the invading forces. However, as the Chinese gained self-confidence, their feelings of inferiority gradually disappeared and, eventually, they were able to give voice to their own cultural distinctiveness. They were thus able to construct a new national and cultural identity that facilitated a discourse between the insider and the outsider as equals. The Chinese then began to take pride in their own traditions.

Thus far, the metamorphosis of *tonghua* in China is not only of significance within the fairy-tale world, but also, more meaningfully, leads our attention to deeper cultural issues beyond fairy tale as a genre. This latter point becomes more important in cross-cultural studies.

In accordance with the mechanism of transmitting and transforming culture in China, integrating ‘foreign’ cultural elements as a discursive tool has been an effective way to enhance the vitality of the culture and to activate the cultural self-healing process. *Tonghua*, at the turn of the twentieth century, played an important role in this process: its format provided a new literary genre to help modernize China, and its spirit awakened the Chinese to the value of their own traditional stories at a time when nationalism was a priority. We have also seen that redefining and renaming is often an effective way of re-validating one’s own tradition and asserting one’s own right to discourse. We have shown that the transition from ‘fairy tale’ to *tonghua* involved two sets of discourses: an external one with the West aimed at establishing equality; and an internal one concerning the construction of children’s literature and child education, or even public education, and, through this, the reconstruction of a national identity. It was also a very important means to help promote the ‘vernacular speech’ (*baihuawen*) movement, which greatly simplified the written style of Chinese literature and, to a great extent, the way the Chinese thought about their own culture. Chinese folk narratives are being retold today on the global stage; however, they are being used to achieve different goals from those at the turn of the twentieth century. Today, they are a crucial way to continue and enhance cross-cultural discourse between China and the West.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE FAIRY TALE IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE LITERATURE AND ART

Mayako Murai

AN OVERVIEW

During the past three decades, fairy-tale adaptations based on both Japanese and Western traditions have increasingly pervaded various areas of Japanese culture, including literature, visual art, film, theater, dance, music, fashion, television, and architecture. Significantly, the recent fairy-tale renaissance in Japan has liberated the fairy tale from the children's sphere and subjected the genre to critical and creative reinterpretations that address adult audiences' various social and psychological concerns. As I have discussed elsewhere (Murai 2015), Yumiko Kurahashi's rewriting of fairy tales and myths from around the world in her 1984 collection *Otona no tame no zankoku dōwa* (Cruel Fairy Tales for Adults), a work often regarded as the Japanese equivalent of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), attracted wide attention and helped arouse the interest of adult audiences in literary adaptations of the fairy tale, especially in its dark or 'cruel' aspect.

Kurahashi's *Cruel Fairy Tales for Adults* paved the way for the so-called "Grimm boom" in the late 1990s, which was triggered by the huge commercial success of Misao Kiryū's collection of sensationalized retellings of the Grimms' tales *Hontō wa osoroshii Gurimu dōwa* (Grimm's Tales Really Are Horrific), published in 1998. The stated aim of Kiryū's collection was to recuperate the violent and sexual elements found in the first edition of the Grimms' collection and to bring out the hidden meanings of those tales. Numerous collections with similar titles emphasizing the cruel and sexual aspects of traditional fairy tales appeared in the subsequent years. What distinguishes the Grimm boom approach from similar intertextual reinterpretations of the Grimms' and other traditional tales in the West is not only the former's exclusive emphasis on sensational subjects but also its Occidentalist reimagining of European tales. The obsession of the Grimm boom writings with violence and sexual transgression can be regarded as a projection of disavowed desires onto the cultural Other, reflecting the other side of Japan's admiration for the imagined West (Murai 2015: 32).

More recently, writers and artists have begun to explore various other kinds of narrative possibilities for the fairy tale that go beyond the Grimm boom writings' preoccupation with sex and violence. *Ankoku Gurimu Dōwashū* (Dark Grimm's Tales),

an anthology of fairy-tale rewritings published in 2017, may best exemplify some of the current tendencies of fairy-tale adaptations in Japan. This anthology, as the word “dark” in the title indicates, is intended for adult audiences and was first published as a special feature in a major literary magazine called *Gunzo* in 2016. It consists of six tales from the Grimms’ collection, namely, “The Girl without Hands,” “The Sea-Hare,” “Bluebeard,” “Hansel and Gretel,” “Rapunzel,” and “Little Red Riding Hood.” The tales are written and illustrated by different writers and artists belonging to different age and gender groups. Although written in different styles and from different perspectives, all the tales either question or subvert gender stereotypes and hierarchy, and none of them has a conventional happy ending with a royal marriage, reflecting the changing values of contemporary Japan.

For example, “Tenashi Musume Kyōkai” (The Society for Girls without Hands), written by Kiyoko Murata, is a sequel to the happily-ever-after of the heroine of the Grimms’ “The Girl without Hands.” As the Japanese representative of the Society for Girls without Hands, the heroine of Murata’s story attends the Society’s annual meeting to share her life story with the other women from all over the world who have been subjected to various forms of paternal mutilation. At the end of the meeting, all the members, carrying their children on their backs, go out to the seashore where they pull off their arms in unison and then, at the count of three, regrow their arms to catch their children just before they slip down into the water. Murata’s playful adaptation subverts the conventional image of the so-called Innocent Persecuted Heroine in traditional fairy tales by multiplying the heroines’ injuries in number and in variation, and by enacting a miraculous collective recovery from violent patriarchal mutilation.

“BB/PP,” Hisaki Matsuura’s retelling of “The Bluebeard” set in near-future Japan, is the most sexual and violent of the six stories in this anthology. Told from the perspective of BB, the Bluebeard figure who is said to have murdered his previous wives, the story depicts the rebellion of his new bride called PP (an abbreviation for ‘purple pubes’), a beautiful custom-built android equipped with artificial intelligence. BB, like Pygmalion in Greek mythology, takes pleasure in ‘humanizing’ PP and developing her personality so as to gratify his sexual desires. Just when he is convinced that she has become his ideal wife – she even obeys his order not to open the forbidden room – she suddenly turns against him and starts mutilating his body on the dissection table in the forbidden room where he has murdered his previous wives. After she has crushed his penis between her thighs and thrown it on the floor, she tears off his testicles, which she crushes one-by-one in her hand above his eyes. He dies happily at the hands of PP, who perfectly mirrors his own monstrous desires and who has become “more monstrous, therefore, more ‘human’ than [himself]” (Matsuura et al. 2017 [2016]: 97). Matsuura’s post-Sadian, futuristic retelling of “Bluebeard,” accompanied with humorous, pop illustrations by Kenji Oikawa, shows how the traditional fairy tale of sexuality, violence, and otherness may continue to serve as a potent framework for re-imagining otherness in a post-human era.

The anthology also includes Yōko Tawada’s retelling of “Hansel and Gretel,” told from the perspective of a woman who falls victim to a post-truth world. The heroine is a widow who runs a bakery by herself after her son’s and her husband’s death. Her bakery becomes very popular because of her skill in baking bread and cakes. However, she is expelled from her town and is forced to hide in the woods due to a malicious rumor spread by an envious man who used to run a bakery in the

neighboring town. When he visits her hut in the woods, she tricks him into getting into the oven and burns him to death. After that, the smell of burning human flesh never leaves the oven. When Hansel and Gretel, two children abandoned by their destitute parents, wander into her hut, they notice the smell and suspect that she may be a man-eating witch. Eventually, Gretel tricks her into getting into the oven and burns her to death in her turn. In Tawada's grim retelling, the talented and independent woman is cast in the role of the witch by various members of society who distort reality so that it matches their perceptions of the truth.

These adaptations of the Grimms' tales by contemporary Japanese writers offer instances of the uses of fairy tales for adult audiences and of the cross-cultural fertilization of the fairy tale currently observed in Japan. These tales reveal the negative effects of gender stereotyping on both women and men in different ways. Heterosexual marriage does not promise a happy ending but is seen as an unimportant outcome or as an occasion for disillusionment. Lack of emphasis on material wealth as a precondition for happiness in these tales also reflects the changing values of contemporary Japan, which has been experiencing a prolonged economic recession since the early 1990s. In what follows, I will discuss, in detail, works by the artist and picture book author Seizō Tashima that use the fairy tale for the purpose of exposing social and environmental problems and bringing about a change in the way people, both children and adults, think and behave.

SEIZŌ TASHIMA'S FAIRY-TALE ACTIVISM

Tashima's interest in traditional fairy tales has been evident from the early stages of his career. In 1969, his illustrations for the picture book based on the Japanese folktale "Chikaratarō" (Mighty Boy) (Figure 28.1) won the Golden Apple Award at the Biennial of Illustration in Bratislava.

"Mighty Boy," classified under the tale type ATU 513 ("The Extraordinary Companions"), tells the tale of a boy who is born from the dirt accumulated over many years on the bodies of a poor old couple and who defeats an ogre to save a rich man's daughter. Tashima's depiction of the boy looks more like a disproportionate monster than a standard fairy-tale hero. Tashima also depicts Kintarō, another fairy-tale hero with superhuman strength, as being as ferocious as the wild boar and the bear that he defeats in wrestling. Tashima has published several other picture books based on traditional fairy tales, most of which depict heroes as wild, monstrous, and morally ambiguous.

The earliest example of Tashima's re-envisioning of the fairy-tale hero can be found in *Shibaten*, the picture book for which he created both the text and the illustrations and which he hand-printed and self-published in 1962. *Shibaten* is a *yōkai* (monster) in the folklore of Kōchi Prefecture, where Tashima spent his childhood. According to folklore, *Shibaten* is a boy about a meter tall whose body is covered with thick hair. He lives by a river and likes to wrestle with anyone who comes his way. He is stronger than adult men and can cause them serious – though not lethal – harm. The passersby, however, can only see the tricked man battling fiercely alone with a bundle of hay or some other inanimate thing.

Tashima's *Shibaten* begins when a newborn boy called Tarō is found abandoned at the edge of a village. He grows up into an unusually strong boy who can beat

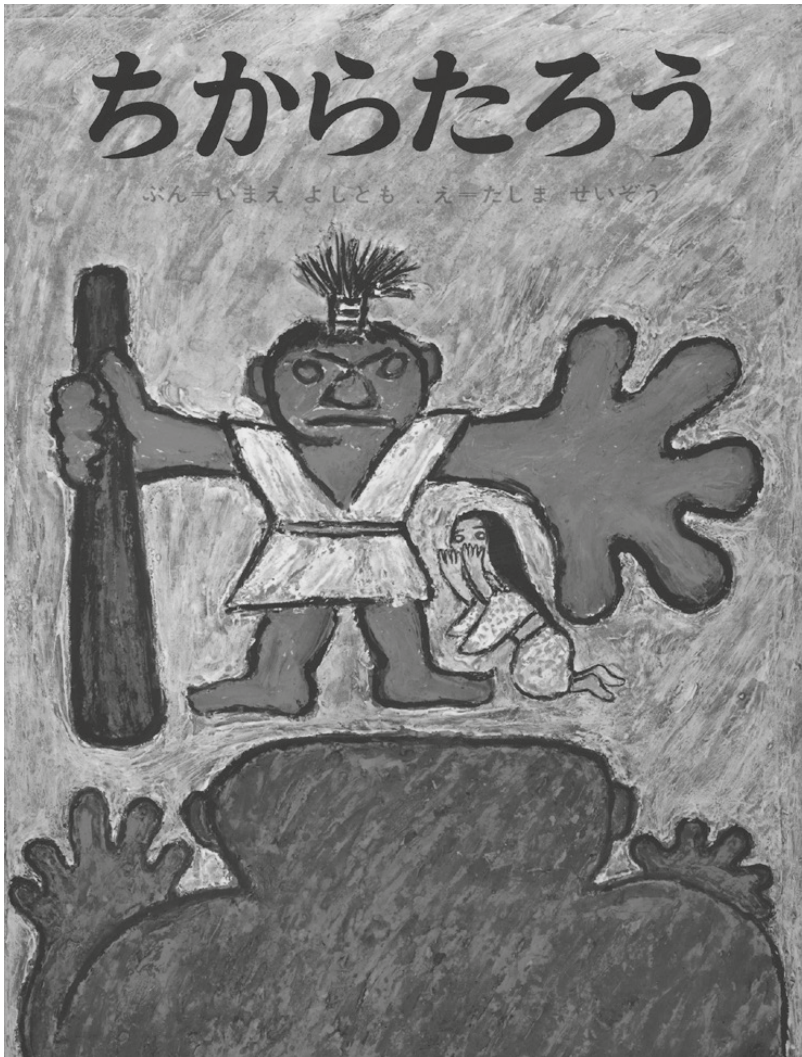


Figure 28.1 Seizō Tashima, cover illustration to *Chikaratarō* (1967). Reproduced courtesy of the artist.

everyone in the village in wrestling. The villagers begin to fear him as a reincarnation of the monster Shibaten and drive him away to the top of a mountain. After several years, Tarō revisits the village to find the villagers starving to death because of famine. He helps the villagers raid the rice granary of a rich man and is welcomed back in the village as a savior. When the officials come to arrest the offender, however, the villagers make Tarō the scapegoat, calling him Shibaten. Tarō is hauled away, never to return.

The hero of Tashima's *Shibaten* is a liminal figure whose double and shifting identity as Tarō and Shibaten problematizes and complicates the dichotomy of good and evil, which is usually presented as clear-cut and self-evident in traditional fairy tales. Tarō/Shibaten blurs the boundaries between human and non-human, reality and

fiction, savior and victim, and self and other, a blurring that is visually represented by dynamic brushstrokes, abstract forms without contours, and expressionistic colors. The story of this radically ambiguous hero haunts the minds of the villagers as well as those of the readers, both children and adults alike, offering an example of a picture book that can be considered to belong to a ‘crossover’ genre that challenges the distinction between child and adult audiences as defined by Sandra L. Beckett in *Crossover Picturebooks: A Genre for All Ages* (2012).

In 2013, Tashima created an art installation inspired by Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid.” This installation, titled *Aozora Suizokukan* (Blue Sky Aquarium), is set in a former dormitory for people with Hansen’s disease (also known as leprosy) on Ōshima, a small island in the Seto Inland Sea that has been a sanatorium for people with Hansen’s disease since 1909 and that became desegregated in 1996. The installation comprises four parts. The first part consists of the room that introduces the figure of the weeping mermaid; in the second part, various marine organisms are displayed in multiple media in corridors and rooms. The third part shows the transformed state of the mermaid after her death, while in the last room of the installation, the pirate, who plays the role of the prince, sails the seas alone. As I will argue below, *Blue Sky Aquarium* expresses two important social concerns in contemporary Japan, that is, the increasing destruction of the marine environment by human activities and the history of prejudice against people with Hansen’s disease, both of which concern the act of casting aside anything that is judged negatively by human society.

Hansen’s disease is a chronic bacterial disease that primarily affects the skin, nerves, and mucous membranes. Once feared as a highly contagious and incurable disease, it is now well established that the disease is not very infectious, is treatable, and, with early diagnosis and treatment, is not disabling. If left untreated, however, it can lead to paralysis and crippling of the hands and feet, shortening of toes and fingers, chronic ulcers on the bottoms of the feet, blindness, loss of eyebrows, and nose disfigurement. In Japan, social and religious prejudices against people with Hansen’s disease prevented them from receiving appropriate medical treatment and aggravated the symptoms. The general misconception of the disease as hereditary, contagious, or incurable has led to enforced segregation, sterilization, and life-long ostracization even after sufferers are cured. The cultural identity of people with Hansen’s disease, therefore, was largely formed by various prejudices reinforced by medical and legal practices and perpetuated by the general lack of information and interest. This practice of constructing a disability through acts of cultural representation, and then imposing that representation upon the afflicted as a medical fact, is examined by Dianne Pothier and Richard Devlin in their study *Critical Disability Theory*. In actual fact, they argue, disability “has no essential nature. Rather, depending on what is valued (perhaps overvalued) at certain socio-political conjunctures, specific personal characteristics are understood as defects and, as a result, persons are *manufactured* as disabled” (Pothier and Devlin 2016: 5, emphasis in original).

Physical deformity is a recurrent motif in traditional fairy tales. “The Little Mermaid,” Andersen’s tale about a mermaid whose love for a human male is obstructed because her fish’s tail is regarded as a deformity by those who live on land, is one example. In her analysis of the characters with disabilities in the four tales by Andersen, “The Little Mermaid,” “The Brave Tin Soldier,” “Little Tiny or Thumbelina,” and “The Ugly Duckling,” Vivian Yenika-Agbaw claims that “Andersen

uses their disabilities ... to heighten their otherness, and consequently ranks them at the bottom of the social ladder, even below able-bodied animals” (Yenika-Agbaw 2011: 92). Ann Schmiesing points out that, in the Grimms’ tales, a disabled protagonist triumphs in the end “despite the social stigma of his disability – a triumph typically rewarded in fairy tales with the magical erasure of his physical anomaly” (Schmiesing 2014: 2). These tales by Andersen, in contrast, seem to promote Christian piety and patience through showing the sufferings of characters with physical anomalies such as the mermaid with a fish’s tail, the one-legged tin soldier, the thumb-sized girl, and the duckling of the wrong color and size, without erasing their differences. It is this non-erasure of physical anomaly in the protagonist that makes Andersen’s tales particularly interesting in discussing Tashima’s use of the trope of physical deformity.

Tashima’s installation *Blue Sky Aquarium* reworks Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid” into a tragic story about those who have been (de)formed and abandoned in the sea by human society. At the same time, it celebrates with life-affirming humor the beauty and the resilience of those existing in the margins of, or outside, society, whether human or non-human. This adaptation is told from the perspective of the hero, who is not a handsome and able-bodied prince but a scruffy pirate with his right eye, his right arm, and his left leg missing. According to *Kaizoku* (Pirate), the picture book that Tashima published to accompany *Blue Sky Aquarium*, the pirate’s left leg has been eaten by a shark, five years previously, and the same shark is watching for a chance to eat the other leg. Self-made artificial limbs and an eye patch, which are associated with pirates especially in children’s fictions such as J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1904), are here used as a reference to the various devices that people with Hansen’s disease once made to supplement their lost body parts.

Tashima’s installation on the island of Ōshima also deals with another social problem which is to do with the environmental damage caused by waste disposal and coastal development in the Seto Inland Sea. Because it is surrounded by three of the four biggest islands in Japan, that is, Honshū, Shikoku, and Kyūshū, the Seto Inland Sea is an area where water circulation between the inner and the outer sea tends to be impeded, causing the area to be filled with various kinds of nonperishable wastes. Also, the worst case of illegal dumping of industrial waste in Japan occurred on an island near Ōshima, called Teshima. In the late 1970s, heavily laden ships started to dump their cargoes of shredded cars and other toxic waste on this island, part of a national park. After a court ruled in favor of the protesting islanders in 1996, approximately 910,000 tons of industrial waste were moved to Naoshima Island to be melted down and detoxified to be reused as aggregate in concrete, a process which was completed in 2017. The purification of the contaminated underground water in Teshima is expected to take several more years. This situation must have had a profound impact on Tashima’s installation as he has long been known for his environmental activism, especially concerning the negative impacts of waste disposal on the environment.

Waste disposal, along with coastal development, has caused serious environmental damage to the marine organisms in the Seto Inland Sea. Hayao Miyazaki’s animation film *Gake no ue no Ponyo* (*Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea*, 2008), set in a town on the Seto Inland Sea coast, can also be seen as a retelling of “The Little Mermaid” from an environmentalist perspective. However, unlike Miyazaki’s film, which ends happily with the help of the sea goddess Granmamare, identified with the Buddhist deity of

mercy, Tashima's work refuses to have recourse to fairy-tale magic in order to give a temporary solace.

The first part of *Blue Sky Aquarium* shows the mermaid crying among rubble in a room painted blue suggesting it is an undersea world; a teardrop made of glass rolls down from her eye onto the floor about every ten seconds. This scene can be seen as an ironic parody of the mermaid princesses in Andersen's story who find pleasure in collecting various man-made objects from wrecked ships. The Little Mermaid's favorite object is a marble statue of a handsome human male, whose image she later finds in a real-life prince. Tashima's mermaid, however, is gradually losing her scales due to the sea pollution caused by human activities; when the last scale comes off, she will die.

Like the mermaid in Tashima's work, various kinds of marine organisms such as fish and sea plants are dying as a result of the coastal developments in the real world. The following rooms show various marine organisms living in the Seto Inland Sea. In a video installation showing etchings of neatly lined-up fishes, a small fish swims away from the picture frame but eventually returns to where it came from. This work seems to reflect the wish of those who used to be confined on this island because of their illness. Even after segregation ended in 1996, most of the residents in Ōshima, whose average age was over 80, chose to stay on the island. This is mainly because the stigma long associated with the disease still exists, and the psychological and social effects may have been more difficult to deal with than the actual physical illness for those who were ostracized for much of their lives.

When Tashima's mermaid dies, she is not transformed into sea foam, nor does she ascend to heaven, as Andersen's heroine does. Instead, she is transformed into a great lump of plastic bottles and other kinds of nonperishable waste that floats among the waves (Figure 28.2). This lump of rubbish is hung from the ceiling and is shaped like a fish. It is made of various kinds of objects thrown into the sea by humans. These objects made from artificial substances do not dissolve in water or in soil, so they remain in their original form somewhere in this world, either in water or on land, for a long time, longer than individual human beings live. Ironically, like Andersen's mermaid, who is promised an immortal soul at the end of the story, Tashima's mermaid is inadvertently turned into a long-lasting, if not immortal, object. From this heap of human waste issues male and female voices that cry out accusingly: "Why did you throw me out?" These objects were formed by humans for themselves and had been used by humans at least once before they were abandoned as rubbish. Tashima's use of both female and male voices suggests that this figure, formed and abandoned by humans, stands for both the mermaid, who acts as a metaphor for the effects of marine pollution, and the pirate, who functions as a metaphor for the social stigmatization of people with Hansen's disease. Interestingly, this colorful object possesses a kind of serene and moving beauty; as Tashima himself claims, beauty can be found in what is believed to be ugly.

Blue Sky Aquarium ends with a room painted in pink in which the one-eyed, one-armed, and one-legged pirate with a sword sits on his boat. The picture book tells us that, after trying in vain to save the mermaid by attacking the coastal developers' ships, the pirate is said to be still wandering around the ocean. One reason why Tashima chose the pirate as the hero seems to be related to the fact that the area around Ōshima used to be known as the base of the most powerful pirates in medieval Japan.



Figure 28.2 Seizō Tashima, from the installation *Blue Sky Aquarium* (2013). The Little Mermaid composed of nonperishable waste from the ocean. Courtesy of the artist.

In the Seto Inland Sea, currents are particularly strong due to the large tidal range and the complex topography with narrow channels and straits. It is in this environment that various pirates arose and became active as traders, coast guards, and members of feudal navies, depending on the situation. This historical fact is reflected in the ambiguous nature of Tashima's pirate, an outsider who is a threat to society but who also tries to protect the natural environment of which all human beings are part.

Although it follows the romantic heteronormative plot and depicts the mermaid as a passive and beautiful heroine typical in canonical fairy tales, Tashima's *Blue Sky Aquarium* offers an example of a fairy-tale adaptation that symbolically expresses the reality of ongoing environmental damage caused by human-centered society and the continuing stigmatization of those marked as not normal and, therefore, not fully human.

As we have seen, the works of Murata, Matsuura, Tawada, and Tashima are indicative of the ways in which contemporary Japanese writers and artists use both European and Japanese fairy tales to address current social, political, and environmental issues and to explore alternative ways of perceiving the self and the world. These works problematize the conventional happily-ever-after formula that serves to reinforce the status quo while rejecting the mere reversal of power relations that often characterizes the Grimm boom's sensationalist approach. What I have discussed above illustrates only one facet of the multimedial and multidimensional engagement

with the fairy tale currently flourishing in Japan, especially in popular culture through media such as manga, anime, and video games as well as in independent films.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

MEMORY, TRAUMA AND HISTORY

Fairy-tale film in Korea



Sung-Ae Lee

Korean “fairy-tale” films and television dramas seek to represent what is important about Korea through the use of traditional folktale and legendary elements. These stories are not fairy tales according to Western usage, so it is more accurate to distinguish between local and syncretic media as folktale films, while restricting the term “fairy-tale film” to a small group which are adaptations of European fairy tales linked to the names of Grimm, Perrault and Andersen. Korean folktales, in contrast, are anonymous, not attributed to a particular writer or collector and are not locally referred to as fairy tales. The two main functions of folktale films in Korea have been cultural conservation and socio-political allegory, but in recent decades these films have predominantly used the material to represent or allude to Korea’s history of colonization, war and military dictatorship over the past century and the struggles of its people to deal with consequent traumatic memory, post-traumatic stress and their continuing impact in a milieu in which the wealthy constantly unsettle the country’s proto-democracy movements. Korean folktale in film and television drama is thus mined for its darker elements and the capacity of the stories to connect with history, memory, trauma and the society’s endemic economic, political and juridical corruption.

There are three broad currents in the development of folktale and fairy-tale film in Korea. The first, and oldest, involves film adaptations of Korean folktales and legends. However, there is not an extensive practice of making films which are close retellings of Korean folktales, and those that exist are apt to be older films such as the six retellings since 1924 of *Janghwa Hongryeonjeon* (The Story of Janghwa and Hongryeon). One of the most distinguished folktale films is Im Kwon-Taek’s *Chunhyang* (2000), which retells the story of the secret marriage of the eponymous heroine, daughter of a courtesan, to the son of the provincial governor. This tale of a persecuted innocent heroine reflects on both the rigid Confucian society of the past and the comparable constraints on social mobility in the present. In general, though, films such as *My Sassy Girl* (2001), *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003) or *Arang* (2006) do not foreground their folktale sources but deploy motifs and structures from them for thematic purposes.

The second current of fairy-tale film retelling consists of a relatively small selection of Western fairy tales which have been adapted for the Korean cinema from the works of the Grimms, Charles Perrault, or Hans Christian Andersen. Popular

Perrault–Grimm tales include “Cinderella,” “Snow White,” and “Hansel and Gretel.” Adaptations of Madame de Beaumont’s “Beauty and the Beast” also appear. Of these, the most commonly adapted story is “Cinderella,” derived from a loose blending of the Grimm and Perrault versions. A small selection from Andersen’s stories is popular, notably “The Little Mermaid,” “The Ugly Duckling” and “The Little Match Girl.” Of these “The Little Mermaid” is most frequently adapted into film and television drama. An adaptation of a Western fairy tale is usually at some remove from its sources, and circulates not as a version of an original but as what is commonly referred to in cognitive studies as a *script*, that is, a narrative prototype of a familiar story which involves a choice amongst possible variants and the coexistence of multiple possibilities (see Lee 2011; see also Schank and Abelson 1977, and Gutierrez 2017). The tales are normally adapted to popular genres – historical drama, horror, romantic comedy, comedy-horror – and occasionally (more often in television drama) different Western sources, such as “Cinderella” and “The Little Mermaid,” may be combined through homologies or common script elements.

The third current in fairy-tale film in Korea blends tales from the two traditions – Korean and European. Although this cross-cultural phenomenon is not often observed in film, it is increasingly common in television drama, where it seems to have become a dominant creative orientation in the twenty-first century. For example, “Cinderella” may be further blended with “Kongjiwi and Patjwi,” the Korean variant of the Asian “innocent persecuted heroine” tale cycle which, as Fay Beauchamp observes, precedes the European versions by several centuries (2010: 449). The blending becomes apparent if the tale extends beyond the point of closure of “Cinderella” (marriage with the “prince”) and the rival (the stepsister Patjwi in the Korean story) displaces the heroine as wife. Blending of tradition is also apparent in the melodrama series *Pureun Badaui Jeonseol* (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 2016–2017) which fuses an adaptation of “The Little Mermaid,” conventions about reincarnation, and references to “Kongjiwi and Patjwi,” amongst other traditions. The series repeats the motif that the mermaid must win love within a certain time or die, and its mermaid, Shim Cheong, knows how the Andersen tale concludes. The mermaid’s name, Shim Cheong, also entails a blending of stories from East and West. It means ‘very stupid’ in Korean and is given her by Heo Jun-Jae, the man she has fallen in love with, because, like Ariel in the Disney adaptation, she was ignorant of everyday social practices when she first started to live amongst humans. At the same time, Shim Cheong is the name of a legendary maiden who, in her willingness to sacrifice herself for her blind father, is a Korean paragon of filial piety (Ha 1970: 40–6). Thrown into the sea, she spends some time in the palace of the Dragon-King on the sea floor, is floated to shore in a lotus flower, is found and married by the ruler of the kingdom, and is finally reunited with her father, whose sight is then miraculously restored.

To further complicate the web of allusions in this series, two versions of the “Kongjiwi and Patjwi” structure are used. First, Jun-Jae’s female friend, Cha Shi-A, is an inept version of the figure of Patjwi who wishes to accelerate their friendship to romance and marriage. Second, Jun-Jae is a “male Cinderella” who has run away from home after being maltreated by his stepmother. Cha Shi-A’s hopes are derailed when she discovers that their house servant, Mo Yu-Ran, whom she has treated abusively, is Jun-Jae’s missing mother. Finally, after Cheong saves Jun-Jae’s life by interposing her body when his stepbrother, Chi-Hyeon (who functions as a male Patjwi

figure), attempts to shoot him, she returns to the sea to recuperate and does not return for three years. In the Korean folktale, Kongjiwi lies at the bottom of a lotus pond in which Patjiwi had drowned her, but remains uncorrupted because of her purity and unresolved grudge. Only after Patjiwi's guilt is revealed does she return to life. When Cheong returns from the sea and enters Jun-Jae's house she is not recognized, just as Kongjiwi was not recognized in her reincarnated forms, but Jun-Jae has kept her in his memory and she is identified as the true bride. The series' mixture of melodrama and comedy promotes the intertwining of motifs from a variety of sources, East and West, and in effect invites viewers to enjoy the game of recognizing the strands of a web more tangled than can be fully illustrated here.

FILMS THAT ADAPT KOREAN FOLKTALES AND LEGENDS

Adaptation of local traditional tales to film is only one means of keeping them in the public memory. Television drama is especially important because of its wide reach and inventive adaptations of familiar stories. Across all media, the most commonly adapted tales are: "Kongjiwi and Patjiwi," "The Sun and the Moon," the related pair "Arang" and "Janghwa and Hongryeon" (Rose Flower and Red Lotus), and "Gumiho" (Nine-tailed Fox). Because Korean folktales circulate in numerous variants and multimodal forms, adaptations in diverse media will tend to combine an invariant core (the script) with variable plot details. For instance, many Korean tales involve a protagonist who has the unusual ability to see, hear, communicate with and even touch ghosts, but provide variable explanations as to why the ghost seer possesses this ability: it may be inherited from a shaman forebear; the character may have briefly died and thus passed back and forth across the boundary of life and death; the seer may have experienced a pseudo-death in the form of a coma, when soul and body might separate and the soul becomes susceptible to uncanny forces; or the ability may be a consequence of brief or extended possession by an evil spirit. The role of the seer is normally positive: ghosts commonly want the seer to resolve unfinished business to allow them to move on into the afterlife, and the seer may either fear these ghosts or willingly help them, as in *Master's Sun* (2013) and *Let's Fight, Ghost* (2016). The seer may even form strong (possibly romantic) bonds with spirits.

A second variable involves the ghosts themselves: a ghost might be an incognizant ghost, that is, a ghost who does not know that she or he has died (Lee 2015: 125), an amnesiac ghost who has forgotten everything about the past, including the cause of death, or the wandering spirit of a living person in an extended coma. Ghosts have a connection with the past and sometimes knowledge or information inaccessible to the living, and hence may play the role of helpers. On the other hand, ghosts are often vengeful and bear a grudge against particular people or the living in general. Since in Korea a woman's social value is still determined by biological reproduction, childcare and home management, the most feared ghost is the virgin ghost, a young woman who has died without fulfilling the conventional female roles of sexual partner, wife and mother, and therefore, in this patriarchal gendered culture, may bitterly resent the living. Virgin ghosts often feature in blends of horror and romantic comedy, but the most fruitful script variant is the amnesiac female ghost, since this plot detail allows for a quest to discover the circumstances of her death, which in turn enables a comedic romance between ghost and ghost seer. This loose structure allows much scope

for social commentary, too, as, for example, in the series *Arang and the Magistrate* (2012) or the young adult series *Let's Fight, Ghost*, which incorporates social issues in ways often reminiscent of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, well known in Korea from the late 1990s. A script cannot instantiate the full range of its possibilities, as some components are mutually exclusive, but its fluidity can enable schemas from other scripts to be imported or new schemas to be added to the script. For instance, the 1972 film *Janghwa and Hongryeon: A Story of Two Sisters* varies its script by importing a new ending from “Kongjiwi and Patjwi,” whereby Janghwa is resurrected from her watery grave in the lake and reunited with her beloved. In modern stories, an isomorphic version of this schema appears in which a spirit wanders while her body lies in a coma, as in *Let's Fight, Ghost*. The strategy allows the impossible romance between ghost seer and amnesiac “ghost” to find an eventual happy resolution.

Most modern film adaptations of Korean folktales and legends are ghost/horror stories. Ghost stories are usually melodramas and/or psychological thrillers, and this modal connection draws upon a key aspect of the dominance of melodrama in South Korean film (see Abelman and McHugh 2005: 4). Horror genres are widespread in East and Southeast Asia and are “cognitively cross-cultural” (Teo 2013: 92). Local or traditional tales signal what are Korean elements, while many visual conventions, such as the partial occlusion of a ghost’s face by long dark hair, belong to global conventions which are employed casually and readily spoofed. The virgin ghost accords with Teo’s formulation of an “Asian-monstrous/feminine” which “encompasses more sedate versions of the female ghost as well as the horrifying ones” and whose roles and appearances alternate between the monstrous and the feminine (2013: 107). This alternation is evident in the female protagonist of the series *Soul* (2009), whose femininity is disrupted by episodes of murderous ferocity of which she is unaware, while the information that she is an incognizant virgin ghost is withheld until the final episode. The theme of alternating personality is also at the heart of the series *Oh My Ghost* (2015), the first episode of which articulates numerous components of a virgin ghost script. Bong-Seon, a diffident and withdrawn young woman who sees ghosts because her grandmother is a shaman, is possessed by an amnesiac virgin ghost, Shin Sun-Ae. Sun-Ae is convinced that the only way to escape her abject state is through sexual fulfillment, but when she possesses a body and embraces a man he faints as a result of her intense ghostly cold. Seeking to escape from a pursuing shaman she enters Bong-Seon’s body but then finds she is trapped in it. Ultimately, the solution to her dilemma is not to lose her virginity vicariously but to resolve the circumstances of her death which, though attributed to suicide, is actually a murder; a development that links the series to the depiction of trauma and revenge in “Arang.” That Sun-Ae’s story is a loose adaptation of “Arang” only becomes clear as the series unfolds.

Motifs of trauma and revenge infuse the schemas which comprise what I will refer to as the *Arang*-script, which embraces both “Arang” and “Janghwa and Hongryeon,” and falls within the wider category of the “innocent persecuted heroine” tale type. In both tales a murdered young girl is avenged and sent to rest by an astute magistrate courageous enough to speak with her terrifying ghost. The “Arang” story was adapted to film by Park Yun-Gyo in 1974 as *Arangnangjajeon* (The Story of Lady Arang) after Park, director of several ghost/horror films, had employed elements of the script in an earlier film, *Kkoma Shilangui Han* (Resentful Spirit of a Child Bridegroom, 1973). Park also revisited the motif of the vengeful ghost of a murdered young woman in

Wonmu (Grudge 1976), in which he adheres to the folktale script of the Arang story, while expanding it into a 93-minute film.

Because the *Arang*-script has remained widely known, it is also commonly invoked in the titles of narratives that are not obviously versions of the folktale, as occurs in the detective film *Arang* (2006). The protagonist of this film, female detective So-Yeong, has been raped and traumatized when young and become a detective to catch the rapist, with no other clue except that he had a scar on his right arm. This story is paralleled with that of the ghost of a girl who has been raped, impregnated, and later buried alive under the salt in a salt storage shed. In order to remind audiences that there is a structural and thematic connection, a synopsis of the Arang legend runs before the final credits.

The most popular adaptation of the Arang story in recent years has been the television historical costume drama *Arang and the Magistrate*. In the folktale, the *Arang*-script pivots on the reported (not depicted) attempts of the ghost to find justice and release and on the courage and probity of the magistrate. In contrast, the series introduces an amnesiac, rather than consciously questing, ghost and a male protagonist, Kim Eun-O, who is self-centered and unwilling to become involved in the problems of others. Arang's amnesia connects her plight with contemporary social concerns in that amnesia may be metonymic of suppressed trauma at a national as well as a personal level, while Eun-O's eventual development from solipsistic idler to dedicated campaigner for social justice is in effect a form of social advocacy.

The analogous folktale, "Janghwa and Hongryeon," has also had a substantial film history. It was adapted to film six times (in 1924, 1936, 1956, 1962, 1972 and 2003) and illustrates how adaptations of a folktale have been used to shape or comment upon Korean culture over a long period. First recorded in the seventeenth century, the tale mingles Confucian and Buddhist motifs with its underlying innocent persecuted heroine script. The latter script, in which an inattentive father fails to see how his ill-intentioned second wife persecutes and destroys the two daughters from his previous marriage, has been reworked in many forms to reflect upon notions of stability and instability in society. The early recorded versions pivot on the role of the wise magistrate who produces a just outcome, and so allows social order to be fully restored when the sisters are reincarnated and the original family structure reconstituted. Numerous modern retellings – in all media – interrogate the possibility of any satisfactory outcome and hence dwell more on the tale's capacity for chaos and mayhem and confront audiences with inexplicable uncanny components.

The most inventive adaptation appeared in 2003. Released in the West under the title *A Tale of Two Sisters*, it is probably the widest known of Korean folktale film adaptations. Psychoanalytic readings of the film as a psychological thriller inevitably overlook the ways in which it is a Korean film concerned with themes of loss, longing and disorder in contemporary Korean society. Puzzling connections between events depicted in the film are best interpreted as (re-)constructions in the unbalanced mind of the older sister, Su-Mi. The story she builds brings amnesia and incognizance together under the umbrella of trauma: Su-Mi has forgotten that her younger sister, Su-Yeon, has died and continues to interact with her ghost, while the ghost is incognizant of her own death. The knowledge is withheld from the audience until the younger sister's death is apparently re-enacted near the close of the film. Su-Mi's construction becomes an example of what Cathy Caruth describes as a repressed

trauma – an event experienced too unexpectedly to be comprehended and therefore “not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (1996: 4).

Another group of folktales dealing with beings on the fringe of, or excluded from, mainstream society which lends itself to film and television adaptation concerns fox spirits, known as *gumihos*, ‘nine-tailed foxes’ (Lee 2011). The practice of adapting these stories for the screen may be said to begin with Shin Sang-Ok’s 1969 film, *Cheonnyeonho* (The Thousand-Year-Old Fox), a metaphysical martial arts film in which a fox spirit possesses the body of a drowned woman with a powerful grudge. Such stories are told throughout East Asia, but in Korea the *gumiho* is normally female and construed as humankind’s monstrous other, in part because her human form is more beautiful than other women, but also because her otherness challenges South Korea’s persistent self-image as an ethnically homogenous society. Notions of the *gumiho* are deeply entrenched in Korean culture, to the extent that a seductive woman may find herself referred to as *yeou* (fox). The core of the *gumiho* script is the desire of the fox to become human, which can happen if certain conditions are met, usually entailing the death of a human; but the script also dictates that the transformation should not happen and the fox must die. Thus, in the 1994 *Gumiho*, the fox chooses to die herself rather than kill her lover, and this outcome establishes a precedent for later adaptations, even the children’s animation *Yeoubi, The Five-Tailed Fox* (2007), although the little fox here is rewarded with reincarnation as a human. One extreme outcome is depicted in the series *Gumiho Ojeon* (Tale of a Nine-Tailed Fox, 2014), which concludes with the genocide of the fox race.

Since the 1990s, the *fox-woman* script has been a focus for cultural conflict. The story has been used conservatively to reinforce dominant cultural discourses about gendered and ethnic difference; but it has also undergone major reinterpretation in attempts to reshape the heritage it represents and imbue it with contemporary significance. As an example of the former usage, broadcaster KBS announced that two short films featuring *Gumiho* in the made-for-television series “Korean Ghost Stories” of 2008 and 2009 were intended to preserve cultural heritage. Of several television series that have resisted this conservative tendency, however, the most recent and most innovative in its trajectory away from affirmation of patriarchal order and ethnic homogeneity has been the very popular *My Girlfriend is a Gumiho* (2010). In this series, the script’s representation of the *gumiho* as monstrous has been challenged through the narrative strategy of aligning the narrative perspective with the *gumiho*, of transforming her from object to subject, and demonstrating that humanity is evidenced by behavior and not by race or social privilege. Such shifts were already evident in two films which incorporate the *gumiho* script as a structural trace, *Shiri* (1999) and *My Sassy Girl*, which explore the potential of the script to be transformed into a narrative about cultural otherness that advocates an open and inclusive society.

The primary structural allusion in *My Sassy Girl* is not to a *gumiho* story, however, but to “Gyeonu and Jiknyeo,” a Korean variant of an East Asian *heavenly maiden* script in which a humble man gains and loses a maiden from heaven as a wife. This tale is more likely to appear as a structural allusion than as an adaptation, although *My Sassy Girl* is overt in signalling the connection, amidst a mash-up of folktales and other genres. Audiences are cued to look for connections from the beginning of the film because the male protagonist has the same name as the Korean folktale character

and, in a flashback to his childhood, his mother is shown dragging him into a public bath-house with the title *Jiknyeotang* (Weaver Girl Bath-House) over the door. There are also clear visual allusions to the folktale (see Lee 2016: 213–17).

Another tale which now appears more often as structural allusion than as adaptation is “The Sun and the Moon.” The original story tells how a sister and brother wait for their mother to come home from work not knowing that she has been devoured by a tiger. The tiger, having disguised itself as their mother, endeavors to eat the children, but they elude it, creep out of their house and climb a tree. When the tiger climbs after them, they pray that the heavens will send down a rope to save them. The prayer is successful, and the pair are drawn up to the heavens by the rope, the brother becoming the sun and the sister the moon. Meanwhile, the tiger also prays for a rope, but falls to his death because the rope that is sent is rotten and soon breaks.

This motif commonly appears in films about stranger danger and home invasions. However, the first short film in the *Horror Stories* collection (2012), “Sun and Moon,” retitled “Don’t Answer the Door” for English distribution, is primarily about the social injustices that result from Korea’s uneven distribution of wealth, the rigid stratification of class, the lack of moral awareness in the rich and powerful and the common understanding that the South Korean justice system is controlled by big business. The film directly invokes its folktale origins through the title, the names of the main characters (Sunny and Moon), and a song based on the folktale which is sung by a group of children being bussed home in the evening after English language school. A small television screen in the bus in which the children are traveling simultaneously reports the self-immolation of a sacked female factory worker in protest against her unjust treatment, and this foreshadows coming events. Sunny and Moon’s mother is CEO in the company that has just sacked its workers and has called in riot police to evict them violently from the factory where they have attempted to stage a sit-in. When the dead woman’s brother telephones the CEO to demand better treatment, she tells him that no one would care if they all killed themselves as it is their social destiny to be trodden upon. Subsequently, while the two children wait at home alone for their mother, the brother slips into the apartment, drenches it with gasoline, and stands holding an ignited cigarette lighter in the film’s closing frame.

A less explicit use of this folktale script appears in *Hide and Seek* (dir. Heo Jeong, 2013), a film about homeless people secretly squatting in the homes of strangers and killing the owners to gain possession of the space. The folktale is directly invoked when a brother and sister are waiting in a car for their mother and the murderer comes and asks them to unlock the car (see Figure 29.1). The brother, however, recognizes that the murderer (a woman) is wearing their mother’s favorite coat. When the murderer is killed, the family quickly sell the house and move away. In conventional horror style, as the new owners take possession in the closing frames the murderer’s complicit daughter is glimpsed hiding in a cupboard. Once again, the adaptation challenges the simple positive outcome of the folktale.

FILMS USING WESTERN FOLKTALES AND LEGENDS: *BUNHONGSHIN* AND *SONNIM*

As stated, only a small number of Western fairy tales or folktales have been adapted for film and television, and these do not appear in multiple versions. This section



Figure 29.1 Film still from *Hide and Seek* (2013), directed by Heo Jeong.

discusses two films as a sample. Adaptations do not transpose fairy tale to film but rather take some distinctive components of a broad script which are then “glocalized” in a locally popular genre such as the psychological thriller. Western fairy tales have also proved to be a useful cinematic resource for films involved in social critique – for example, films that depict female behavior in conflict with the neo-Confucian ideology that continues to inform Korean gender roles. For instance, the 2005 film *Bunhongshin* (The Pink Shoes, dir. Kim Yong-Gyun) reworks Hans Christian Andersen’s story about vanity and disobedience, “The Red Shoes,” to explore local themes, including neo-Confucian gender assumptions, the negative aftermath of Japanese colonization, and possession by a vengeful ghost. The protagonist of this film, Seon-Jae, is the epitome of the abject feminine, as her husband bullies her in multiple ways (reminiscent of the *Gaslight* method for driving a wife mad): he criticizes her dress taste; he refuses to help with Tae-Su’s school and ballet routine, and when this goes awry and Seon-Jae returns home early she finds him having sex with a lover, who is wearing Seon-Jae’s shoes at the time. She then moves out, taking Tae-Su, and a traumatic series of events involving the pink shoes then commences. The trauma is grounded in an historical trauma in 1944 involving rivalry between two ballerinas, Keiko and Ok. Keiko is a Korean who had adopted a Japanese name as the Japanese colonizers of Korea had made mandatory by 1944, and is thus metonymic of a loss of identity and subjectivity, especially as she and Ok participate in a ballet celebrating the Japanese imperium. The two squabble over possession of a lover and the pink shoes. Keiko murders Ok and then (after Andersen) is forced to dance uncontrollably by the shoes until she and her lover are supernaturally strangled by stage ropes (see Figure 29.2). Late in the film it is disclosed that the shoes have caused Seon-Jae to be possessed by the vengeful ghost of Ok and she has murdered her husband and two women. The fairy-tale pretext thus furnishes the adaptation with a loose structure and a couple of motifs blended with local ghost lore.

Sonnim (The Guest, dir. Kim Gwang-Tae, 2015) is based on the widely retold German legend of “The Pied Piper of Hamelin.” The international DVD release was retitled *The Piper* to acknowledge the source, whereas the Korean title, *Sonnim*, means



Figure 29.2 Film still from *The Pink Shoes* (2005), directed by Kim Yong-Gyun.

‘guest, visitor,’ but is also a euphemism for smallpox, a disease of foreign origin which entered and ravaged Korea from the fourth century until its final eradication in the late 1950s. In a novel to which the film alludes, also titled *The Guest*, the author Hwang Seok-Yeong uses the plot to explore the arrival of Christianity and Marxism, two other foreign “diseases,” whereas the film draws on the theme to address epidemics in general. The setting of the film is localized to the mid-1950s, not long after the Korean War (1950–1953), and to a remote unmapped and unnamed mountain village. Attempting to travel to Seoul to seek a cure for his son’s tuberculosis, a musician stumbles upon the village and seeks hospitality for a night. The piper offers to clear the village of an infestation of aggressive rats, but when he does so the village headman refuses payment and instead maims one of his hands and drives father and son away, giving them a small amount of food which he has poisoned. After his son dies, the piper releases the rats from the cave in which he has trapped them. The starving rats return to the village and promptly attack and kill all the adults, whereupon the piper lures the remaining children into the cave and seals the entrance.

The nameless village is a microcosm of modern South Korea. The villagers have suppressed the secret that they themselves had arrived in the village as strangers and had murdered the previous occupants, members of a leper colony – an act that mirrors atrocities committed during the Korean War that have also been erased from memory. The headman now maintains control over the village by withholding any knowledge of the outside world; in particular, he conceals the fact that the war has finished, and it is no longer dangerous to leave the village. While such isolationism is more characteristic of North Korea than of the South, the construction and maintenance of the notion of a foreign enemy is endemic to totalitarian regimes and particularly to the kinds of dictatorship which characterized both Koreas following the war. The rat infestation, as Maggie Lee observes, “symbolizes any of Korea’s political, social and cultural maladies – cronyism, xenophobia, subjugation of women and a fundamental lack of trust and honesty between individuals” (2015: n.p.). As with *Bunhongshin*, *Sonnim* demonstrates that adaptations of Western fairy tale employ narrative structures and motifs for local purposes rather than for any

possible transcultural significances. This practice also applies to adaptations such as *Cinderella* (directed by Bong Man-Dae, 2006) or *Hansel and Gretel* (directed by Yim Pil-Seong, 2007), or the imaginative adaptation of “Snow White” in the series *King of Baking, Kim Tak-Gu* (2010).

BLENDING WESTERN AND KOREAN TALES: *KONGJWI AND PATJWI AND DOKKAEBI*

I conclude this chapter with a discussion of two productions that blend Korean and Western traditions, a short film and a 16-part television series.

The third film of the *Horror Stories* omnibus (2012), *Kongjwi and Patjwi* (DVD release as “Secret Recipe”) is a comedy-horror mashup of some segments of the traditional “Kongjwi and Patjwi” tale and motifs from “Cinderella,” “Bluebeard” and “The Red Shoes.” In this film, the character of Patjwi undergoes cosmetic surgery to make her look like Kongjwi – an apparent allusion to Bong Man-Dae’s *Cinderella* (2006), in which a cosmetic surgeon adopts a street orphan in order to transplant the orphan’s face onto her disfigured biological daughter. On her wedding day, Kongjwi dreams that her feet have been amputated (after Andersen) and is drugged and, like Cinderella, kept at home in her room. Patjwi, meanwhile, becomes the bride.

In the traditional East Asian tale, when the substitution is discovered Patjwi is executed and her flesh made into a pickle which is sent to her mother, who dies of shock when she realizes what she has eaten. The film instead blends “Bluebeard” and legends about elixirs of eternal youth by depicting the groom killing his wives on the wedding day in order to acquire their flesh as the main ingredient for a pickle which keeps him eternally young. Kongjwi wakes up in the kitchen of the groom’s house, and runs to claim her groom, arriving in time to witness the dismemberment of Patjwi. A little later, the groom quietly savors his new pickle while his mother remarks on its magical efficacy. Having returned home, Kongjwi dresses as Patjwi in her memory; her stepmother receives a jar of pickle, consumes it, and begins vomiting when she realizes what she is eating. In a culmination of the film’s horror parodies, Kongjwi gouges out her own eyes, presumably because of the temptations and horrors they have witnessed.

Television drama exhibits such cross-cultural mishmash more prominently than film, but may also combine it with a blending of period and contemporary drama, that is, fusion historical drama, which can be enabled by the Buddhist belief in reincarnation and the possibility that a previous life can be remembered. The second highest rated drama in Korean cable television history, *Sseulsseulhago Chalanhashin Dokkaebi* (Goblin: The Lonely and Great God, 2016–17) is an outstanding example of this practice. In animistic Korean belief, ordinary objects such as a broom or an item stained with human blood can become imbued with life and so develop into a *dokkaebi* (inaccurately translated as ‘goblin’), a mischievous creature which plays pranks on people but may also reward goodness. Kim Shin, the eponymous *dokkaebi* of the series, is a human general whose sword has been transformed into a *dokkaebi* after his death as an arbitrary punishment for the many people he slaughtered in battle. He is, viewers learn, doomed to live forever, transfixed by the sword, until he meets the *dokkaebi*’s bride, who will pull out the sword and give him oblivion. The action of the series takes place 900 years into Kim Shin’s punishment.

While the series includes some motifs from *dokkaebi* stories, the core story is original and not traditional, and is further blended with other folk motifs: in particular, a pervasive concern with reincarnation, which figures traumatic memory and post-traumatic stress but eventually enables the main characters to find happiness in a later incarnation. Prominent characters in the series include Ji Eun-Tak, the female protagonist (the *dokkaebi*'s bride), a ghost seer who was meant to have died before birth and was orphaned at age nine, and is overtly identified as a Cinderella figure; and a *jeoseung saja*, a psychopomp in Korean tradition (here renamed 'Grim Reaper' in subtitles) who is foisted upon Kim Shin as a house mate when his house is leased without his knowledge. Going even further than "Kongjwi and Patjwi," the series employs its eclectic borrowings to engage viewers in a game of playful recognition, ranging from the locally familiar – a woman who appears sporadically as young or old is the Samshin grandmother, goddess of birth and fate – to blockbuster films (*Men in Black*, 1997, in Episode 3), to the quite arcane: for instance, a scene in which Kim Shin sits on the edge of a high building watching the stream of people below and then swoops to earth, appears to be a visual reference to an early moment in Wim Wenders' film *Wings of Desire* (1987).

South Korean film and television drama uses adaptation of well-known traditional folktales and a small number of Western fairy tales as a significant domain in which to comment on Korean social, political and economic life. At the same time it can exploit audience familiarity with these tales to produce inventive and highly entertaining narratives which, over the past half century, have tended to move away from their pre-texts to demonstrate that folk narrative is a flexible and ever-renewable resource.

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CHAPTER THIRTY

FAIRIES IN A STRANGE LAND

Colonization, migration, and the invention of the Australian fairy tale



Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario

Australia's fairy-tale tellers approached the landscape as a blank slate, if not as *A terra nullius*. They populated the country with a range of fairies; black, white, local, immigrant, elegant, and vulgar. Australian fairy tale was a collaboration and contest to create an Australian tradition that only rarely relied upon adapting traditional, European tales. Australian authors focused instead on creating tales that captured the unique nature of Australian life, their fairies ranging from vulgar larrikins in slouch hats to elegant women in diaphanous gowns. Exploring the *fin de siècle* period from the 1890s through to the 1920s, incorporating Australia's Federation (1901) and including newspapers, books, and pantomimes, it is evident that the identity of the nation and its people was being negotiated in these fairy tales.

Fairy tales, of course, do not necessarily feature fairies, but fairies are significant in the tales of the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century periods both in Australia and England. The genre of fairy tales takes its name from its fairies, the author Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy coining '*conte de fées*' in the seventeenth century. Her tales and those of her immediate female peers feature an assortment of powerful, regal, often elegant female fairies. These French tales were taken up by English translators, writers, and publishers and, as Paula R. Backscheider indicates, "[t]he literary fairy tales of the French feminists are an intriguing, neglected influence on British fairy tales" and by extension Australian tales (2013: 85). D'Aulnoy's name does, in fact, make appearances in the Australian press during the *fin de siècle* period. For example, "A Singed Moth," an anonymous story in *The Hillston Spectator and Lachlan River Advertiser*, notes:

Edna is reading Madame d'Aulnoy, and is so excited over the adventures of the green serpent, that is her way of reading, now. I tell her that when she gets older she will not be so excited, and she rejoined she was never going to get old enough not to be excited over Madame, who was an angel.

(1901: 6)

It is certainly the prominence given to fairies that mark the seventeenth-century French and Victorian/*fin de siècle* British and Australian tales. Nicola Bown argues that Victorians

made the fairies into imaginary versions of themselves, and imagined fairyland as a version of the world they themselves inhabited. They consoled themselves by looking at their worst fears and greatest worries for themselves and their world in a magical, enchanted form.

(2001: 1)

Laurence Talairach-Vielmas likewise notes that “as fairies permeated Victorian culture, appearing in works of art, scientific essays and even advertising, the publication of fairy tales exploded” (2014: 2). However, where in British tales there was, as Jack Zipes maintains, “a psychological urge to recapture and retain childhood as a paradisiacal realm of innocence,” Australian tales celebrated hardier childhoods and created a magical, colonial world that was often strange and scorching hot (1987: xx).

In Australian tales, the fairies act as conduits for shaping national identities and culture. Moreover, a proliferation of tales literally identify themselves or the fairies as Australian or as migrants to Australia. For example, Atha Westbury titles his book *Australian Fairy Tales* (1897) and in “The Bank Cat,” a tiny fairy identifies himself as one of the “*Sevle naila rtsua*,” being ‘Australian Elves’ backward (1897: 112). Alongside Australian fairies, Westbury’s “Gumtree Hollow” features a green fairy, McKombo, asserting in his broad brogue, “I’ve tould ye I’m an Irishman. Captain Brophy imported me to the colony in a hat-box twenty years ago” (1897: 118). Irish migrants were generally associated with rebels, convicts, and bushrangers (Akenson 1991: 60). McKombo, having traveled with Captain Brophy, is more respectable, but nonetheless a helpful rascal. In “The Fairy of the Vase” from Olga Ernst’s *Fairy Tales from the Land of the Wattle* (1904), fairies are transported to Australia inside a Japanese vase, Strasburg clock, and Chinese baskets, the former entranced by wattle blossom. In “Sunridia,” from the same collection, an Australian fairy sleeps upon a “eucalyptus blossom couch” (1904: 29). In Ernest Favenc’s “The Two Fairies” from *Tales for Young Australia* (c. 1900), an English fairy tells an Australian fairy how she fell asleep in a flower that was then pressed in the pages of a book and carried to Australia. Thus, Australian fairy populations grew with the nation.

Favenc’s English fairy, however, laments that “it’s not a nice place for fairies out here” (c. 1900: 31) and her sentiments are echoed in a range of tales serving to distinguish Australian fairies from their English peers. Carneil’s Katie in “An Australian Fairy Tale” (1896) reads a book of English fairy tales, but despairs: “I’ll never see a fairy in Australia. It’s much too hot and dry here” (219). Many tales begin with such a claim. In E.A.G.’s “Little Darkies: An Australian Fairy Tale” (1910), a tale with obvious racist issues, the fairy-tale loving Nell, like Katie, laments, “[w]hat a pity there are no fairies in Australia” (2). Sister Agnes tells her readers in *Fairy Tales Told in the Bush* [1911] that “Tom sighed sadly, thinking that if only he lived in England instead of in Australia, there would come a little fairy” (34). Authors reiterate the absence of fairies, eager to counter with their own tales. In effect, they reject the relevance of books of English tales, establishing Australia as a blank slate they can colonise with their own fairies. James Hume Cook opens his collection, *Australian Fairy Tales* (1925), with his daughter’s comment that “[n]one of the books about Fairies ever say a word about Australia! Are there any Australian Fairies, Father?” (n.p.). Hume Cook insists there are “[w]hole tribes of them!” and his collection represents an account of these tribes (n.p.). The promotion of Australian fairies contributed to fostering a sense of nationalism through the tales themselves. Hume Cook was

himself a politician who campaigned for Federation, winning the Federal seat of Bourke in 1901 (Hancock). His book boasts a foreword by former Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, with whom Hume Cook had helped form the ill-fated Australian Party. Hughes elaborates, “[t]hanks to the researches of Mr. Hume Cook, we are now able to wander through the enchanted Bush with real Australian Fairy Princes and Princesses” (n.p.). Of course, the tales are not ‘researched,’ but invented, the reference to research providing a patina of authenticity and antiquity in order for the tales to compete with folklore histories of Europe.

The shift to tales written for Australians is prompted by the trend Jan Keane notes: “Australian children in the late nineteenth century were becoming different from British children, and their newly emerging character reflected the local context and circumstances” (2003: 125). Fairies were devised for this emerging audience. Thus in “Moonland,” Westbury geographically reorients his reader: “it must be borne in mind that the same laws of Nature which guide and rule the Mother Country are somewhat erratic here at the Antipodes” (1897: 197). Westbury situates his tales in specific Australian localities, “Moonland,” for instance, placing its hero in the Blue Mountains. There are fairylands in his collection, but in “Whiskerkiss,” they mimic colonial cartography, a weary explorer being “last of a band of nine who have attempted to explore the central portion of our vast continent, where on the Atlas we read, written right across the great blank, *Unexplored*” (1897: 123). Westbury alludes to the tail end of colonial exploration of the Australian interior. Here at the heart of Australia, the explorer discovers grotesque creatures and the magnificent court of Bo-Peep with its unlikely, golden-haired princess.

The notion of undiscovered regions is not uncommon in the tales, providing territory for fairies, but these fairies are ironically often ethnically European. Clare Bradford asserts that such “[f]airies introduced into the Australian landscape thus reassure readers about their status as inheritors of ancient (European) traditions of fantasy transposed into a new land” (2011: 117). Indeed, as Bradford notes of *Gully Folk* (1919), they become “the true Aborigines” of Australia (122). Hume Cook’s book begins, “[m]ost people seem to think that the heart of Australia is nothing but a sandy desert” when in fact, “though not a great number know it, the very, *very* centre is inhabited by Fairies” (1925: 13). Prince Waratah is physically and culturally Anglo-Australian, his eventual bride, Princess Wattle Blossom, “gloriously beautiful and charming” (62). There are other, more “uncivilized” fairy tribes, but the main fairies epitomise European gentility and aristocracy, further articulated in Christian Yandell’s illustrations. Alongside tales of swaggies and bushrangers, Westbury’s “Rubywings,” also evokes an undiscovered region populated by elegant, implicitly white fairies. The Frost King tells an elderly man, “this is the wall encircling the land of the Australian Elves, O mortal!” (1897: 265). Here the grizzled hero encounters Rubywings, a fairy riding a chariot drawn by butterflies, resplendent in “delicate tints and shades which the moonbeams had woven in her robes” (267). Her face reveals “blended purity and beauty” and her voice is “[e]xquisitely, deliciously soft and musical” (268). Australian fairies in these territories often aped the sophisticated elegance of regal English fairies: references like Westbury’s to purity embedded the casual racism and class discrimination implied by the fairies’ superiority.

Elegant, white fairies were particularly favored by female authors and illustrators drawing upon English fairy-tale aesthetics. Such fairies were essentially appropriate

subjects for young colonial women of the middle and upper classes, invested with the cultural power of the Victorian ‘angel in the house,’ a pure, benevolent, domestic figure. Appearing in *The Week*, a Queensland newspaper, “Joy and the Cloudland Fairy: An Australian Fairy Tale” (1920) is aptly published under the epithet, “a ‘daughter of the commonwealth’” (18). The Cloudland Fairy lives in the sky “busy spinning the clouds that were to attend the sun’s departure. Roseate and pink, silver and grey, crimson and burnished gold, the pretty things fell from her loom” (18). The emphasis on prettiness lends the tale its distinctive femininity, with the colors and style reminiscent of the art nouveau period. The orphaned Joy, sobbing beneath gum trees, lives with a canefarmer and his wife, grounding the tale in the rural Australian landscape. The wife is a classic wicked stepmother, cruel to the orphan and, when her husband defends Joy, she throws “a saucepan lid at his head” (18). The fairy decides to resettle Joy with “a woman who wears a white apron over a neat blue gown” (18). There is a conspicuous repetition of the woman’s appearance, a sartorial short hand for well-ordered, modest domesticity. She has an English cottage garden of “[h]ollyhocks and violets and pansies,” privileging English aesthetics in the bush setting (18). Upholding ideals of domesticity, in contrast to the canefarmer’s wife, she reminds Joy that “[e]ducation is a fine thing, but the lass that cannot sew and knit and bake has missed the finest part of it” (18). The Cloud Fairy promises to come back for Joy when she has learned “life’s lesson,” namely, acting selflessly after her husband is killed at war (18). Mother Truman goes back to keeping a very tidy house. As Talairach-Vielmas notes, tales by such female authors “frequently have a whiff of morality about them” (2010: 273).

Young women, in particular, took advantage of the genre’s association with feminine virtue to publish their own work and consequently had a major hand in the fashioning of Australian fairies. Ida Sherbourne Rentoul (Outhwaite upon her marriage) and her older sister, Annie Rattray Rentoul began their professional collaboration when Ida was a teenager, working together on numerous books such as *Mollie’s Bunyip* (1904) and *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* (1922). Although Annie Rentoul’s words have faded from popular consciousness, Ida Rentoul Outhwaite’s elegant illustrations of chic, ethereal fairies in ink and watercolor continue to attract interest. Olga Ernst and Ethel Jackson Morris also published their first books – *Fairy Tales From the Land of the Wattle* (1904) and *All Among the Fairies* (1909) respectively – in their teens, while May Gibbs published her first Australian fairy book, *Gumnut Babies* (1916), at a more mature age. Ernst is explicitly Australian in her approach, as is evident from her title’s evocation of the pervasive wattle. A publishers’ note asserts “the association of familiar elements of old-world fairy lore with Australian surroundings” (1904: n.p.). The tales conjure such Australian locations as the river Goulburn, Hobson’s Bay, and Lake Eyre. Morris illustrated and wrote her own fairy tales. In 1921, Adam McCay in the *Sunday Times* paired her with May Gibbs under the headline “Delightful Children’s Books Written by Australian Women – Roamings in a New Fairyland,” referring to Morris’s “super-dainty fairy tales” (23). Her work primarily imitates English tales, her illustrations delicate and pretty, rather than identifying as explicitly Australian. Of course, Gibbs’ name is still recognized in association with flora-inspired fairy creatures, now iconic Australian characters, and as Bradford notes, her tales exist in “a different symbolic space: her imagery is consciously and self-consciously Australian” (2011: 124). Her work was, in fact, instrumental in shaping a unique Australian fairy tale during the twentieth century.

However, hardier masculine characters are also common in Australian *fin de siècle* tales and such rugged fairies mark the greatest break from the traditions of the English fairies. Such fairies are embedded in the mythology of the larrikin, a figure associated with bad, though good humored, behavior. As Melissa Bellanta notes, “the larrikin is one of the standard characters through which late colonial Australia is imagined” (2008: 131). Such larrikin fairies are usually male, although Favenc’s Australian fairy, who delights in some destructive behavior, is something of a larrikin herself. Carneil places a larrikin-fairy in the dry, harsh realities of Australia’s bush, in which settlers must carry tanks for miles in order to fetch water from a running creek. Katie, a young child, is inadvertently left behind. The Australian fairy pops up, being “the colour of the dead grass” (1896: 219). Although his coloring sidesteps racial implications, as the king, he wears a slouch hat and carries a stock whip, typical accoutrements of a white settler. He identifies Katie as “the little girl that thought fairies couldn’t live in Australia. You thought it too hot for them” (219). The fairy asserts that Australian fairies prefer heat. He speaks in a “slangy manner” quite different to “[t]he polite little people of fairy lore,” or, in other words, the noble English fairies (219). Instead of fairy bells, the Australian fairies have music “just like the laughter of the jackass birds, with the boom of the bittern for a drum” (219). The music mimics Australia’s natural soundscape rather than ‘civilized’ compositions. The fairy calls his compatriots with a “Co-o-ee,” a particularly Australian exclamation (219). They dance, whipping up the dust, thus enacting the larrikins’ habit of “dancing mad” (Bellanta 2008: 141). They eat gold and drink “the spirit of the Bush,” an intoxicating eucalyptus liquor, from handy gum nut cups, rejecting any suggestion of drinking water (Carneil 1896: 219). This is very different to Hume Cook’s fairies who “quaffed a fairy flagon of clearest water,” the flagon’s artistry described in minute detail (1925: 37). Like Hume Cook’s fairies, Carneil’s are fiercely patriarchal, but more offensive in their sexism, parroting contemporary debates about women’s suffrage: “our wives stay at home and mend the clothes. No new women and woman’s franchise for us,” rejecting such rights as “a blow at the rights of man” (1896: 219). The fairy king rejects Katie’s book knowledge of fairies: “We are real up-to-date, *fin-de-siècle* fairies” (220). The insistence on being up to date distinguishes these Australian fairies, but also, taking into account the politics of their portrayal, permanently dates them.

Children’s books and newspapers weren’t the sole medium for Australian fairy tales. Pantomimes were as popular in Australia as in England and along with performances of traditional fairy-tale fare like *Cinderella*, original pantomime material with a distinctly nationalistic flavor was produced. Indeed, the suffragist and the larrikin were two of the popular archetypes of the stage in the late colonial period (Bellanta 2008: 131). Veronica Kelly argues that

[i]n the context of an emergent colonial culture, with various interests vigorously contesting the definitions of the terms ‘Australian,’ ‘British’ and ‘colonial,’ nationalism was not some comfortably neutral background but a political prize to be anxiously scrambled for.

(1993: 61)

“The colonial stage,” Kelly further maintains, “was a primary site of such discursive contexts,” especially the pantomime stage (61). In particular, the elegant, feminine

goodness of female fairies and their protégés was contrasted with the vulgar, masculine, larrikin humor employed by many of the supporting characters. J.C. Williamson presented two uniquely Australian fairy-tale pantomimes, *Djin Djin, the Japanese Bogie Man or The Great Shogun Who Lost His Son and the Little Princess Who Found Him: A Fairy Tale of Old Japan* (1895) and *Australis, or, The City of Zero* (1900). *Australis*, set in the year 2001, was a science fiction commemoration of Federation. Josephine Fantasia argues, “Williamson was seriously concerned with projecting a political vision for Australia” whereby “Australian nationalism as synonymous with British Imperialism is consistent with his own decision to pursue empire building in the Australian theatre industry” (1993: 90). However, the pantomime was less concerned with fairies and was not as successful as its predecessor.

Djin Djin was not really based upon a Japanese tale, despite its calculated claim to antiquity, but capitalized upon an interest in ‘oriental’ subjects. It tells the story of young Prince Eucalyptus and his servant, Tom Wallaby, shipwrecked in Japan, and the evil Djin Djin who threatens the life of Princess Iris. The narrative is orchestrated through a contestation between the fairies and Djin Djin, a common trope of seventeenth-century French tales. The fairy queen of Japan is Chrysanthème and she ensures a moral, happy outcome for the princess. Prince Eucalyptus, of course, as his title suggests, is a patriotic, imperialistic paragon of whiteness, a forerunner of the nationalistic vision Fantasia deciphers in *Australis*, boasting, “I’m an Australian boy, I’m proud to say” (1895: 71). Tom Wallaby is the larrikin, lamenting that suffragettes “try to copy man when they should stop at home and stitch” (75). He would have kept good company with Carneil’s fairy. Gender became a particular battle ground for national identity in such pantomimes, as is evident in the struggle between the larrikins and the civilising, increasingly activated, female fairies and protégés.

Ida Rentoul designed costumes for Williamson’s pantomimes, including “Humpty Dumpty” (1907). The sisters also produced an illustrated book for the latter. ‘Peter Quince’ in *Punch* complimented Annie Rentoul who “writes with the point and vivacity of the celebrated fables by Madame d’Aulnoy” (1908: 275). As in d’Aulnoy’s tales, the orchestrator of events is a female fairy, and the book includes pantomime practices of celebrating national identities and topical matters, particularly in a ballet in which the Fairy Claribel instructs the states to appear before the new king, Humpty Dumpty; Queensland, for example, in pineapple leaves, Tasmania in apple blossom, and New South Wales in wool (Rentoul 1908: 20). The states then form up as the Australian flag in a rousing gesture of patriotism. Rentoul also cites members of the Australian cricket team, Trumper, Hill, Noble, and Duff, and opera singer, Dame Nellie Melba (5). Rentoul references contemporary technological innovations, too. When Humpty Dumpty is frustrated in desire for a princess, he disperses her friends in air ships, motor cars and even balloons that can reach Saturn (21). The old king, meanwhile, takes an omnibus (22).

Technological innovation, evident in Rentoul’s narrative flourishes, was prized in pantomime performance, *Djin Djin* concluding with a great electrical illumination, for instance. Such innovation was common enough in Victorian fairy tales. Talairach-Vielmas says that “although fairies offered journeys away from the Victorians’ own disenchanted world, they were intricately linked to many aspects of modernity, be it technological advances, scientific ideas, or even socio and political issues” (2014: 2). Hume Cook’s book, especially, has an extraordinary focus upon technological and

scientific ideas. When Prince Waratah decides to build a city at the magical well, he enlists a vast contingent of “working Fairies,” describing in great detail all their equipment, which includes “surveyors’ instruments and engineers’ tools” (1925: 27). Everything is provided, even “a set of fairy legs on which to travel. These were most ingeniously made, filled with electrical energy” and “[w]hen they were run down, just in the same way as the storage batteries which give light to tram-cars are replenished, they were recharged with electricity” (27). The prince’s engineers also contrive an aeroplane or “flying carriage” from bamboo stalks, bearing in mind that the aviation industry was still in the early stages of entrepreneurism as Cook wrote (60). Thus, Hume Cook explores the innovative potential of fairy-tale modernity as Australia progresses through the twentieth century.

The negotiation of national identity occurring in the tales, however, largely overlooks Indigenous peoples. Indigenous storytelling existed long before the formation of the Australian nation, but it is a distinct and unique storytelling tradition. There were early attempts to appropriate Indigenous storytelling as Australian fairy tale, with often well-intentioned aims to acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous stories. Katie (Catherine) Langloh Parker collected tales from a local Indigenous community, stating that her aim was to “establish a free trade between the Australian and English nurseries—wingless, and laughing birds, in exchange for fairy godmothers, and princes in disguise” (1896: xi). She provides names of the original tellers and details her collection methods, an effort that does at least provide acknowledgement of sources. Sister Agnes’s *Fairy Tales Told in the Bush* (1911) includes tales she credits to the Indigenous elder, William Barak (Beruk), of the Wurundjeri people, described simply as “the last King of the Yarra Tribe” (v). Barak was a distinguished leader, cultural liaison, artist, storyteller, and police trooper. Sister Agnes nevertheless provides a portrait of Barak embedded in the prejudices of the time, caricaturing his appearance:

Barak was all *very much* of everything about him. He was *very* fat and shiny, his eyes were *very* black, his hair *very* frizzy, his nose *very* flat, and his lips *very* thick, his laugh *very* jolly, and his heart *very* kind.

(1911: 51)

In another story, Barak’s English stands out in the narrative in its vernacular:

You all too greedy ... you come to see black man, black man make native fire, black man throw boomerang, black man throw spear; white man give him black brother pennies, pah, white man greedy, no give black man baccy, only pennies.

(21)

Barak here is described as dirty, sitting as white tourists come to buy baskets and see “funny black babies” (21). Barak’s political and cultural importance and dignity are elided in Sister Agnes’ racially stereotyped portrait. Importantly, these Indigenous stories presented as fairy tales were offered as part of the colonial project to establish an Australian cultural identity and were not directly authored by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Authors also invented their own black, “indigenous” fairies and other characters, but these, too, tended to affirm, rather than dismantle, racist discourses, sometimes

quite overtly. E.A.G.'s "The Little Darkies, An Australian Fairy Tale" features "exact miniatures of the aboriginals" which have wings that "shone with beautiful prismatic colours" (1910: 2). They reject being called fairies, since fairies are white, and call themselves 'darkies', turning Nell herself black. She is rescued by blonde, white fairies, who undo the spite of the 'darkies.' Ernst's mermaid in "The Unselfish Mermaid," goes to the mouth of the Yarra to rescue a "blackfellow" under the spell of a witch (1904: 47). For her efforts, she is transformed into a tree, the man, though unaware of her intervention, portrayed as ungrateful. Both tales conform to the white savior myth, disparaging the wicked behavior of the black characters and confirming the 'good' white fairy creatures. Minnie Rowe, too, includes Indigenous peoples and references to the lost "black piccaninnies" in the adventures of white children in *Gully Folk* (1919: 75). Clare Bradford argues "[t]he dilemma of colonial children's literature is that it seeks to position non-Indigenous readers as young Australians at home in their world" (2011: 122). The fairies thus become the original Australians, "so displacing the Aborigines who are now treated as merely the first of the migratory peoples" (Bradford 2011: 123).

Atha Westbury's "Hop-O'-My-Thumb" is somewhat unusual in featuring the Unknown Country, never before visited by white people (1897: 326). This is the closest the tales really come to establishing Indigenous fairy creatures as First Peoples, although the land is ruled by an alarming caricature of an Indigenous fairy-tale creature, a giant: "a gigantic blackfellow, tall as a tree, and with a great woolly head (not unlike the big ball that is hoisted at noon on the flagstaff at the Observatory)" (328). He is ugly, nude, and wields "a monstrous waddy," an Aboriginal Australian's club, thus explicitly identifying him as Indigenous (328). Tiny Thumbcake travels there and establishes a station for cattle and sheep. He is a hard working, white squatter, or, as Westbury writes a "brave wee squatter" (329). His cleverness wins over the giant, who permits him to stay, a rather fanciful description of the colonization process that privileges the squatter over the Indigenous custodian.

Ernest Favenc's "The Two Fairies" (1900) is notable for its meeting of Australian and English fairies. The English fairy asks if "her black sister" is Australian, implying ignorance of Australia's First Peoples (27). Described as "a pretty little fairy, although quite black," the 'although' further implies the casual racism of the period (27). Likewise, when the Australian fairy describes the fun she has waking up possums, catching locusts, and tossing sticks at koalas, the English fairy is derisive of her savagery (28). Nonetheless, the accompanying illustration does not caricature, nor grotesquely distort, the features of the Australian fairy and her diaphanous dress is similar to that of the English fairy (29). She travels to England with her new friend where "she made quite a sensation, and was the belle of that season" (32). She becomes an exotic curiosity, and thus provides evidence for Juliet O'Connor's contention that "colonial narratives intended for child readers suggest that colonial benevolence would enhance the lives of Indigenous children" (2014: 111). The Australian fairy thus escapes what is perceived as a dangerous life, where she must hide from the Bunyip, to enjoy a more pleasant existence. Once again, the white fairy becomes the savior, the persistent trope of the fairy tales of this period.

Australia's fairy tales of the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century period are largely forgotten today, having made little permanent impact in fostering a long-lived Australian fairy-tale tradition. They were all too much a product of their particular

time, their very objective in creating a tradition for the “new” nation rendering them curios of that nation’s past. The competing inventions of Australian fairies nevertheless reveal the contested identity of that emerging nation and its gender, class, and racial prejudices. These Australian fairies present a snapshot of the Australia that was.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

RENEGOTIATING ‘ONCE UPON A TIME’

Fairy tales in contemporary Australian writing



Danielle Wood

The twenty-first century has seen a burst of fairy-tale activity in Australian literary writing, publishing and scholarship. The Australian Fairy Tale Society was established, and its activities have served both to marshal existing resources and stimulate new research, much of it with a historical focus on early attempts to forge an Australian fairy-tale tradition. Two of Australia’s literary journals, *Griffith Review* (which has a broad general readership) and *Text* (which, as the journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs, has a more academic audience), have in recent years devoted special issues to fairy tales in Australian writing. Meanwhile, and as surveyed below, the commercial publishing sphere has been alive with the production of fairy-tale retellings in the form of novels, short fiction collections and anthologies. However, for all of this activity, which confirms Australia’s participation in a global “fairy-tale web” (Bacchilega 2013: 18), the range of uses to which contemporary Australian writers have so far put the fairy tale has been curiously constrained. The nation’s writers continue to look primarily to Europe for narratives they can use as the inspiration or scaffolding for new fictions, but unlike contemporary writers in countries such as the USA and Canada, they have not confidently remade Europe’s best-known tales in their own local contexts. Rather than reshaping European tales within conspicuously Australian settings, this country’s most prominent fairy-tale revisionists have overwhelmingly chosen to set their new fictions in Europe itself, or else in fantasy worlds. While fairy tales are thriving down under, it would be difficult to make the case that Australia has a fairy-tale tradition that it can truly call its own.

Although the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw concerted efforts to create a distinctive Australian fairy-tale tradition, these attempts largely failed. Most of the bespoke bush fairy tales that were written during that period, many of them featuring “koala-hugging, girlish fairies and plump cherubs in gum-tree foliage” (Do Rozario 2011: 13), fell into obscurity. Meanwhile, the notion that Australian Aboriginal stories might provide the foundation for a unique folklore was more or less abandoned, partly because of a growing understanding that Australian Aboriginal tales “are not fairy tales” but repositories of “sacred and cultural knowledge and law” (Bullen and Sawers 2016: 234), and partly because white Australia defaults to a practiced avoidance when faced with something that may require a reckoning with

the violent realities of the colonial past. Bullen and Sawers observe that “the very existence of Australian fairy tales is deeply complicated by the country’s history of colonization” (2016: 233), but this may turn out to be true not only in relation to the past, but also in consideration of the present. I suspect that the restricted range of fairy tale activity in present day Australian writing is caused at least in part by ongoing anxieties generated by the omnipresent impact of colonization/invasion, and the resultant challenges of representing both real and imagined pasts.

In Australia, where history is broken into two utterly unlike components by the cataclysmic events of colonization/invasion, the words “once upon a time” are anything but innocent. Here, “once upon a time” does not bear the reader away into a “timeless, spaceless, quasimythic sphere” (Thomas 1986: 126) but instead poses an immediate and unavoidable question: before colonization/invasion, or after? To write an Australian story that in any way touches on a distant past, whether real or imagined, is to face inevitable choices about how one’s creative work will “‘manage’ the colonial past” (Bradford 2001: 15). Will it “obscure the violent origins of the contemporary nation” (Bradford 2001: 15), or illuminate them?

In the 1960s, the Australian writer Alan Marshall set out to write a children’s novel with “witches and elves and dragons all mixed up in an Australian setting” (1978: 77), and in so doing, he provided a remarkable case study for the problems that Australian writers face when revising European fairy tales in their own backyard. *Whispering in the Wind* doubtless seemed to Marshall a fairly straightforward proposition. It has a rollicking plot that follows the adventures of the young seeker-hero Peter, and his sidekick Greyfur the kangaroo, who can pull from her magical pouch anything that might be required: a meal, an elephant, a table and chairs, or even an iconic Australian wharfie and his crane. Shot through with a playful, colloquial humor and blessed with a high-profile author (well known for a best-selling memoir about his childhood experiences of polio), the book probably seemed destined for easy success. Yet, much to Marshall’s lasting disappointment and bewilderment, it failed to gain any significant traction. The novel, which spent decades out of print before a recent revival, demonstrates some of the reasons why “the fairy tales of the northern hemisphere did not easily take root in the antipodes” (Bullen and Sawers 2016: 233).

The story begins with a call to adventure from a mentor/donor figure, in this instance the South Wind, who wishes to take on Peter and his fleet-footed pony as employees. But when Peter tells the South Wind that his heart’s desire is to rescue a beautiful princess from a dragon, the South Wind sweeps the land to discover for Peter the location of the last remaining princess. Additionally, in true fairy-tale donor style, he gives to Peter a most important gift: a pouch containing a magic leaf. Like the titular character of Norman Lindsay’s *The Magic Pudding* (1918), the leaf is eternally renewable. When given away, the leaf has the power to make the fearful brave, the unkind kind, the suspicious trusting. Says the South Wind: “It means, ‘You are loved; you are needed.’” (1967: 7). Peter bestows a leaf upon just about every character he encounters, whether friend or foe. With each instance of giving, Peter is gradually transformed – through the magical acquisition of items of noble garb – into a prince. At last, Peter wins the hand of the beautiful princess, but rather than installing himself in her deposed father’s castle, he takes his lady back to his rough, tumble-down shack, where he and she plan to enjoy grilling chops over the coals of an open fire.

Whispering in the Wind was in trouble within its first four words: “Once upon a time.” With these words, and while intending only to write a charming book for children, Marshall (unwittingly?) landed himself right in the middle of a shame-filled and usually occluded minefield. Faced with the postcolonial dilemma of how to manage time, Marshall chose to obfuscate. *Whispering in the Wind* begins, “Once upon a time, long long ago, beyond the Tin Shed and on the other side of the Black Stump, there lived an old man and a little boy” (1967: 1). Immediately, a false note is struck: although the reader is told that the time is “long, long ago,” the man is a stockman and this Australia comes ready-populated with post-colonization/invasion features such as horses, live-stock and tin sheds. The facts of Australia’s founding are generally considered to be out of place in fiction for children, but by following the sanitizing tradition of hiding those facts, Marshall effects a reorganization of time that can be read as an attempt to elongate colonial time, and to deepen (possibly even legitimize) the roots of white Australia.

On the end-papers of an early hardback edition of the novel there appears a map (Figure 31.1). It features a dotted line indicating Peter and Greyfur’s progress through the landscape. Their journey is drawn as a semi-circle, and in the untraveled heart of it there appear three figures: an Aboriginal man with a spear, and two Aboriginal children, all standing beneath a waterfall. Although these figures are central to the illustration, Aboriginal people play a very minor part in *Whispering in the Wind*.

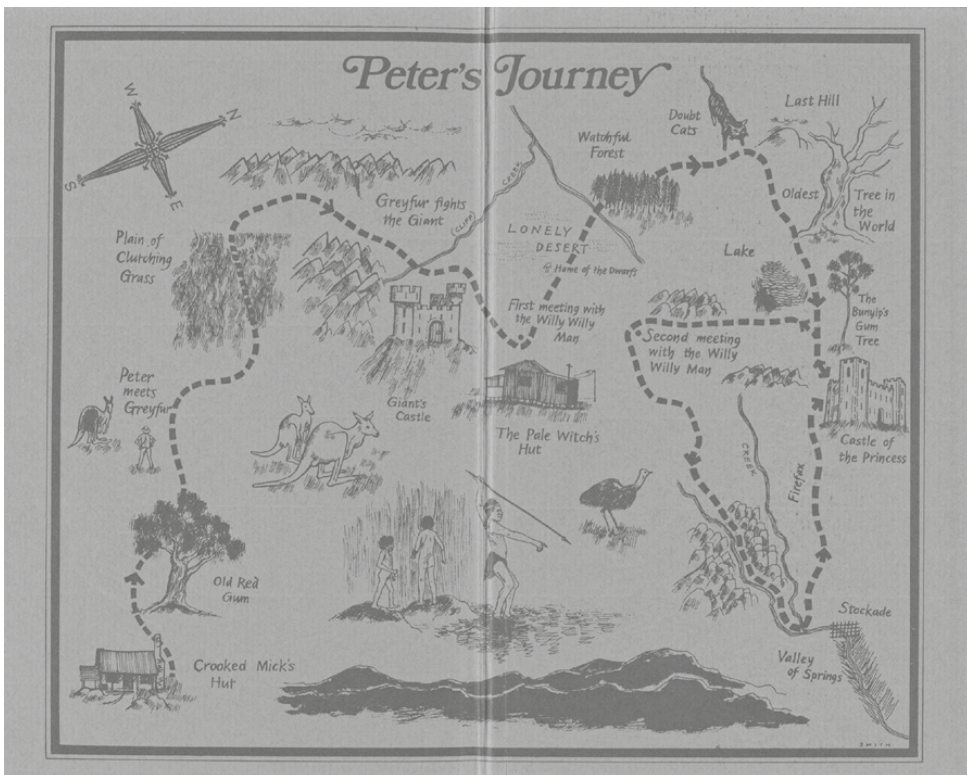


Figure 31.1 Endpaper illustration to Alan Marshall’s *Whispering in the Wind* (1967).

The endpaper drawing directly references a short scene in the first chapter of the novel – the only scene in which Aboriginal people are seen, or are heard to speak. They appear, however, at one remove; their words and actions are related only within the spoken narration of the South Wind. When Peter asks the South Wind where he might find a beautiful princess to rescue, the South Wind – in a move reminiscent of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – dashes away and returns in an impossibly short period of time, having covered a vast distance. During his short absence, he has “swept into the land of the aborigines” (1967: 5). The Aboriginal man with the spear tells the South Wind that beautiful princesses “lived in the Dreaming Time of my people,” but were all transformed into birds; “there are none left in all Australia except one; she is the prisoner of a selfish King and is guarded by a Bunyip” (1967: 6). Marshall thus effects a semantic separation between the land in which Peter lives with Crooked Mick in his Tin Shed, and the “land of the aborigines” (1967: 5) into which the South Wind blows in order to obtain the wise counsel of the Aboriginal man. Marshall ascribes to the Aboriginal man ultimate wisdom. Nevertheless, he cordons him off in a land that is separate to the version of Australia, populated with white and postcolonial figures, in which Peter conducts his adventures.

During his writing career, Marshall forthrightly wrote and spoke up about the poor living conditions of Australia's first nation peoples, and in the late 1940s he spent a period of time living in Arnhemland collecting indigenous folktales. But his empathy and enthusiasm for Aboriginal Australia did not preserve him from a significant degree of clumsiness in the pages of *Whispering in the Wind*. The last princess, despite her supposed origins in the “Dreaming Time” of the Aboriginal people, has the long fair hair of the traditional European fairy-tale princess. She is called “Lowana,” which she tells Peter is an Aboriginal name meaning “first daughter”: a further example of Marshall's blundering efforts to incorporate and honor indigenous Australia in a text that in every other way elides, silences, compartmentalises and sidelines it. In *Whispering in the Wind*, Marshall tried to have it both ways – to obscure the colonial past, and to acknowledge the dispossessed. Perhaps the fantasy genre allows room to read the world of *Whispering in the Wind* as a parallel version of Australia, one with a history that has been altered and adjusted for the reader's comfort and entertainment. But even if a reader chooses to interpret the setting in this fashion, the novel painfully illustrates the issues that Australian authors face when engaging with “once upon a time” in any version – realist or fantasy – of the Australian landscape.

In “Fairies in a Strange Land,” Chapter 30 in this volume, Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario describes another, and related, problem for fairy-tale reinventionists working in an Australian context. It is that fairies themselves, and other fairy-tale creatures and characters, are profoundly ancient, and may therefore be presumed to be endemic to the landscape in which they appear. Do Rozario explores how the installation of European-derived fairies in the Australian bush appears to make the fairies the “original Australians” (see p. 375), effectively “displacing” indigenous Australians (Bradford 2001: 123). Nineteenth and early twentieth century Australian fairy-tale writing showed little sensitivity to this dilemma, which is no less present for contemporary writers. To write into the Australian landscape a giant, a griffin or a fairy, is still to risk a kind of imaginative, retrospective colonization of the pre-contact nation. These difficulties of time and belonging may explain why so many Australian fairy tale writers choose to set new work in Europe, or in fantasy worlds.

As Cristina Bacchilega notes, fairy tales “enjoyed an explosive popularity” (1997: 2) in the second half of the twentieth century, due in part to their reproduction across a range of media. While Australia was perhaps a little slower than North America and Western Europe to take part in this surge of interest and activity, in the opening decades of the twenty-first century it has made up for its tardiness.

A central figure in the Australian movement is Kate Forsyth, whose *Bitter Greens*, *The Wild Girl* and *The Beast’s Garden* offer a popular blend of fairy-tale retelling and historical fiction. *Bitter Greens* (2012), is a multi-stranded novel set in different periods of French history that brings together a reinvention of “Rapunzel” – in which the fantastical elements of the fairy tale have been grounded in a material history – with a fictional telling of the life of French fairy-tale writer Charlotte-Rose de la Force. Forsyth continued her interest in historical fairy-tale tellers with her follow-up novel, *The Wild Girl* (2013), which relates the story of the relationship between Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and their neighbor, Dortchen Wild, who provided them with a number of the stories they later published in their famed collections. Forsyth’s latest novel, *The Beast’s Garden* (2016), uses the structure of “Beauty and the Beast” to spin a historical tale set in Nazi Germany. The heroine, Ava, marries a Nazi officer in order to protect her father, and although she despises the regime that employs her new husband, she soon discovers the deeper dimensions and intentions that lie beneath his army uniform. Europe, therefore, is the setting for each of Forsyth’s works. Two more Australian retellers of fairy tales, Juliet Marillier and Sophie Masson, set their works in what might best be described as fantasy versions of Europe. Blending historical fantasy and fairy tale, Marillier’s *Daughter of the Forest* (1999) retells the tale “The Six Swans” in the distant past of Ireland, which is also the setting for her retelling of “Beauty and the Beast,” *Heart’s Blood* (2009), while her *Wildwood Dancing* (2006) situates a reinvention of “The Twelve Dancing Princesses” in sixteenth century Transylvania. Sophie Masson’s work for young adults includes retellings of “Snow White” in *Hunter’s Moon* (2015), “Rapunzel” in *The Crystal Hart* (2014), “Cinderella” in *Moonlight and Ashes* (2012), “Sleeping Beauty” in *Clementine* (1999) and “Puss in Boots” in *Carabas* (1996). Her work also draws on sources that lie beyond the best-known of the European tales: her 2013 novel *Scarlet in the Snow* is specifically based on a Russian retelling of “Beauty and the Beast,” while her 1998 novel *Cold Iron*, responds to “Tattercoats,” the English variant of “Cinderella,” and her 2001 novel *The Firebird* incorporates elements of several Russian tales.

Some of the most compelling and original recent work in Australian fairy tale comes from two writers who set their tales in entirely fantastical settings: Angela Slatter and Margo Lanagan. Slatter’s collections of dark and crafty fairy tales are sometimes described – including by Slatter herself – as “mosaic novels.” *Sourdough and Other Stories* (2010), and *The Bitterwood Bible and Other Recountings* (2014), set in a world which is often reminiscent of that of the Grimms’ tales, feature female characters that transcend the good/evil binary and frequently explore issues of sexual politics. Lanagan’s *Sea Hearts* (2012), based on Celtic selkie tales, is set in the haunting locale of Rollrock Island, where (almost) all the men are married to strangely passive and almost indistinguishable women. These “willowy and bewildered” Stepford seal-wives with their “silken hair and such dark eyes” (2012: 157) bear children to the men, but only the male children survive. Lanagan’s *Tender Morsels* (2009), a dark and disturbing

version of “Snow White and Rose Red,” is set in two fantasy worlds that are separated by a semi-permeable boundary. One of these worlds is a place of cruelty and perversion, and it is here that one of the central characters, Liga, begins her life. Abused by her father, she bears him a child; after her father dies, she is the victim of a gang rape. Pregnant again, Liga is mysteriously transported to a second world, a kind of heaven, where she and her two daughters – one dark-haired, one fair – are able to live in peace, although this peace is later disturbed when two bears/men are also transported into the alternate world.

The fictions surveyed above are stand-alone works by writers with an ongoing interest in fairy tale, but in recent years Australian writers who are less regularly engaged in fairy tale retellings have been presented with opportunities to publish in this genre. In 2013, the Australian literary magazine *Griffith Review* dedicated an edition, titled *Once Upon a Time in Oz*, to the exploration of the place of fairy tale in Australian letters, current affairs and popular culture, while Isobel Carmody and Nan McNab conceived and edited *Tales from the Tower Volume One: The Wilful Eye* and *Tales from the Tower Volume Two: The Wicked Wood*. All three of these publications have provided both an invitation and a venue for Australian writers to experiment with fairy tale. Some tales in Carmody and McNab’s volumes, including Cate Kennedy’s story “Seventy Two Derwents” (which retells “The Wolf and the Seven Kids”), Nan McNab’s “Glutted” (which retells the Czech fairy tale “Otesaned”), and Maureen McCarthy’s “The Ugly Sister” (a “Cinderella” retelling), are very obviously set in Australia. The remainder are set in a fairy tale or fantasy location, an international locale, or else in a geographically uncertain, semi-realist, present. Australian settings feature in two of my own works, *Rosie Little’s Cautionary Tales for Girls* (Wood 2006) (a collection of linked short stories with a Little Red Riding Hood-esque narrator and coming-of-age themes) and the long fiction collection *Mothers Grimm* (2014) (which reinvents “Rapunzel,” “Briar Rose,” “Hansel and Gretel” and “The Goose Girl” with a focus on those tales’ mother figures). Although some of these stories reference the apron strings that continue to bind Australia to the “Mother Country” of England, questions of place are not their central concern; rather, the works have a primarily feminist focus.

Australia thus has a strong cohort of writers who are working in the fairy-tale realm. It also has a wealth of writers who consider it their business to explicitly explore and critique questions of place, identity and nationhood. However, if Australian literary culture were represented by a Venn diagram, it would reveal that there has so far in the twenty-first century been remarkably little overlap between the two spheres of endeavor. Notable works that do lie in that confluent space include Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book* and the considerable fairy-tale inflected oeuvre of Carmel Bird.

The Swan Book is not a straightforward novel. One reviewer wrote: “Wright’s mash-up of sing-song fabulism and political invective, first-person perspective and omniscient narration, ancient myth and popular culture fries the reader’s circuits” (Williamson 2013: n.p.). Although its generic complexity will likely limit its audience, the novel demonstrates that exciting possibilities emerge when indigenous Australian writers engage with fairy tale revision, opening up new spaces for interplay between ancient storytelling practices and transported tales. Employing a blend of fairy tale allusion and dystopian imagination to critique the past and present of race relations in Australia, *The Swan Book* is set in the climate-damaged future, where a young

Aboriginal girl called Oblivia (named for her lost or damaged identity) lives in a swamp that will come to be known as “Swan Lake.” As a child, Oblivia has slept, fairy-tale style, for a full decade, in a hollow of a eucalyptus tree. There, she has been discovered by her benighted community’s only white woman, the refugee Bella Donna, who fills Oblivia’s imagination with stories of the white swans of Europe. In Oblivia’s life, however, it is the black swans of the antipodes that populate her days, her dreams and her visions, and that visit her in their droves in her moments of decision and crisis. It is her fate to become the trophy wife of the first indigenous prime minister of the nation, the soulless Warren Finch, and eventually to escape him with the help of her swans, who locate her in a city apartment/prison to remind her of her origins by dropping their feathers “down like magic so that her mind ran straight back to the swamp’s ancient eucalypt” (2013: Chapter 13, paragraph 9). A particularly interesting aspect of *The Swan Book* is Wright’s treatment of time. When writing her Miles Franklin Award winning novel, *Carpentaria*, Wright – a member of the Waanyi nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria – explained that she wanted to “understand the idea of Indigenous people living with the stories of all the times of this country, and secondly, how to write from this perspective” (Quoted in Webb 2013: n.p.). This is a project that she continues in *The Swan Book*, where time telescopes and “stretches, lurches, halts” (Webb 2013: n.p.), ultimately resisting the before/after binary that holds most Australian writing in its grip.

Carmel Bird’s many fairy-tale inflected novels and short stories demonstrate an enduring fascination both with fairy tale and with the dark side of the Australian psyche. Bird traces her long-standing fascination with fairy tale to her upbringing in Australia’s island state of Tasmania, a location, she says: “that pops up in literature when a writer seeks a far off, inconsequential, mythical or gruesome place to insert into the prose” (Bird 2015: 10), and a place that she, as a girl, experienced as “strange and haunted” (Bird 2004: 11). Those three of her novels – *The White Garden* (1995), *Red Shoes* (1998) and *Cape Grimm* (2004) – that comprise a trilogy on the relationship between charisma and evil, incorporate motifs from, and references to, specific well-known fairy tales. In *The White Garden*, Ambrose Goddard’s pioneering Deep Sleep Therapy treatments enable him to rape his female patients in the “Sleeping Beauty” ward; *Red Shoes*, a novel that shares a title with a literary fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, features a group of girls who are drugged and brainwashed by the charismatic cult leader Petra Penfold-Knight, and who remind the reader of the bewitched heroines of “The Twelve Dancing Princesses.” However, it is in *Cape Grimm*, set in the northern Tasmanian location of Cape Grim (though with an extra ‘m’ to underscore the narrative’s relationship to fairy tale), that Bird most directly addresses Australia’s history, and fairy tale, together.

Cape Grimm establishes its fairy-tale credentials early; not only is it prefaced by a fictionalized letter from “Jakob Grimm” to the wife of the Governor of Van Diemen’s Land (the first colonial name for Tasmania), the novel also begins in fairy-tale fashion: “Once there was a fair country where the people lived in peace and in prosperity until there came a time when a strange child appeared and the land was turned to dust, to dust, and ashes” (2004: 2). But already Bird is telling “fairy tales,” for the island has – since colonization/invasion – had no more than a veneer of peace and prosperity. *Cape Grimm* is a multi-stranded work in which the history of settler violence against Tasmanian Aborigines provides historical counterpoint for a fictional late twentieth-century mass killing wrought by the charismatic messiah,

Caleb Mean, against his own religious followers. Mean's massacre is seen in terms of the 1978 Jonestown mass murder-suicide and deaths at San Diego's Heaven's Gate sect in 1997, but Bird binds references to these events with allusions to other horrors: The Cape Grim massacre of Tasmania's indigenous Toogee people, the 1996 lone gunman massacre at Port Arthur in southern Tasmania, and the SIEV-X tragedy in which asylum seekers drowned in an attempt to reach Australian shores. References to various fairy tales are consistently layered into the text in a fashion that seems to suggest that it is the business of stories to repeat themselves, and that perhaps, Tasmania's overarching and inescapable narrative is one of violence.

It's worth noting, however, that neither Wright nor Bird precisely *retell* tales from the European tradition. Rather, they break down their source texts into fragments that are scattered through new works as hints, intimations and echoes. It seems to me that Australian literary culture has tacitly developed two primary modes of interacting with fairy tales – to retell them in faraway or in fantasy settings, or to fracture them when telling them at home – and that these two modes may be designed to make fairy tales feel 'safe' to be retold within an antipodean context.

Elizabeth Bullen and Naarah Sawers suggest in their excellent article surveying the state of Australian fairy-tale film that filmmakers may feel similarly, though not identically, constrained. They observe that "Australia has a short history of fairy tales and an even shorter history of fairy-tale film" (2016: 233) and attribute the general shortage of Australian fairy-tale films to "the absence of an indigenous fairy tale tradition" (2016: 243) and a long-lasting preoccupation with national identity that has taken up most of the nation's screen-time. They further note that fluctuations in the fortunes of the Australian film industry have been a contributing factor.

In visual arts media – where a work's locus in place and time is not always such an indispensable component as it is in literature and film – recent years have seen significant developments in fairy-tale influenced work. Of special note are Shaun Tan's fairy-tale sculptures, made as part of a collaboration with UK writer Philip Pullman for the purpose of illustrating the German language edition of Pullman's retellings of the Grimms' tales. When English language editions of Pullman's book were published without illustration, Tan separately published images of his sculptures in the 2015 book *The Singing Bones*, in which each of the 75 sculptures is accompanied by an excerpt from the story that inspired it. Bringing together technical skills learned from his Malaysian–Chinese father, and inspired in part by folk art sculptures seen in Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology, Tan's poignant sculptures echo the deceptive simplicity of the fairy tale itself, and its capacity to communicate across cultural boundaries. Also of note is the work of photographic artist Lorena Carrington (Figure 31.2), whose delicate silhouette imagery harks back to the fairy-tale illustrations of Lotte Reiniger and Jan Pienkowski, while at the same time introducing a hint of Australiana in the bush foliage of her backdrops (Carrington has recently collaborated with Kate Forsyth to publish *Vasilisa the Wise*, an illustrated retelling of the Russian tale).

Fairy-tale writing, art and scholarship are presently proliferating in Australia and this seems unlikely to abate. While recent fairy-tale research has focused primarily on the presence of the fairy tale in nineteenth century Australian literature, this work has hopefully mapped and illuminated the causes of fairy tale's initial failure to thrive in Australia, and provided a strong foundation that will allow for critical analysis of the country's fairy-tale literature to progress through the decades. An increased spirit



Figure 3I.2 Lorena Carrington's *Wild Swans* (2011).

of collegiality and collaboration in the fairy-tale space also promises a vibrant future. *The Swan Book*, with its unique blend of storytelling traditions and its liberating approach to time, may inspire new ways of producing fairy tales with Australian settings, while the cross-cultural possibilities demonstrated by Shaun Tan's fairy-tale sculptures indicate that Australia could already be on the road to producing more globally-oriented, hybridised – even decolonial – fairy-tale adaptations. While Australia is a very long way from having a body of fairy tales of its own making, it may soon – by continuing to look critically inwards, and inclusively outwards – develop distinctive ways of doing business with fairy tales on home soil.

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PART V

EUROPE





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CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE EUROPEAN SOURCES OF THE FAIRY TALE

A case study of ATU 171, “The Three Bears”



Rose Williamson

Unlike many folk and fairy tales, ATU 171, “The Tale of the Three Bears,” has an origin and history associated with a single country (England) and a specific audience (children). The version which catapulted “The Three Bears” into popularity was that by Robert Southey, originally published anonymously in 1834 in Southey’s miscellany, *The Doctor*. Southey was an English Romantic poet and a believer in pantisocracy, a theory of egalitarianism that Southey created with Samuel Taylor Coleridge which stressed that “equality and fraternity was to extend to all men and women alike – not to mention animals” (Bernhardt-Kabisch 1977: 23). Southey’s peers were foregrounding animals and nature, and he followed suit:

for Romantic artists, animals particularly satisfied a desire to find alternative, local, and noneconomic means of human connection – a social appeal that is especially prominent in the late-eighteenth century poetry of Wordsworth and of his friend and occasional collaborator Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

(Fosso 1999: 3)

Animals and nature abounded in Southey’s poetry, and it is not surprising, then, that his scant foray into fairy tales produced a legacy engrossed with the lives of anthropomorphised bears. Southey addressed the tale of “The Three Bears” thus: “Prick up your ears then, my good little women and men! and ye who are neither so little, nor so good, *favete linguis* [hold your tongues], for here follows the Story of the Three Bears” (Southey 1848: 327–9). And so, in this way began the tale’s fame, though not its origin, calling to young children to be the audience, cementing the tale’s didactic message in the nursery.

The history of the printed variants of this tale type began somewhere in the early nineteenth century, though I argue that the tale has a longer history than that. It was long attributed to Southey, although he had made it clear in the first publication of his version of the tale that the story came from elsewhere – an oral source, Southey’s own uncle (Saint John 1967). Joseph Jacobs made his original assumption in 1890 that this story belonged to Southey and was “the only example [he] knew of when a tale that can definitely be traced to a specific author has become a folk-tale” (Jacobs

2002: 166). That so many fairy-tale authors use framing devices of oral storytellers perhaps clouded the fact that Southey had outright stated the tale belonged to someone else, but Jacobs believed Southey was the original author until discovering the oral tale of “Scrapefoot the Fox,” which he subsequently printed in 1894 in *More English Fairy Tales*. Contemporary reception of Southey’s original publication was very positive, and made the tale immensely popular, one of the factors that gave him the false attribution of the creator of the tale. Jacobs noted that “as Prof. Dowden [a scholar and biographer of Southey] remarks, Southey’s memory is kept alive more by ‘The Three Bears’ than anything else” and calls it a “nursery classic” (Jacobs 2002: 166). The following chapter seeks to explore the potential sources of Southey’s tale in both oral tradition, and in the textual traditions of Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Its aim, in so doing, is to understand how a single fairy-tale text, scripted at a specific moment in history, nonetheless draws upon a complex network of precursor texts from diverse traditions. In conducting this analysis, the present chapter will also seek to show how, through adaptation, a story is adjusted to suit different cultural contexts. In particular, this chapter focuses upon changes in the depiction of food in the story, and will explore the significance of these changes for our understanding of the tale and its historical development.

THE SOURCES OF “THE THREE BEARS”

A paper by Mary Shamburger and Vera Lachmann (1946) sought to connect the origin of the tale with Southey’s interest in Scandinavian literature, suggesting that the tale was inspired by the Norwegian “Snow White” and arguing that Southey concocted a formula of tale elements from various tales to create “The Three Bears.” However, this research was published before the discovery of an earlier text, Eleanor Mure’s version which was written in 1831. Shamburger and Lachmann also make no mention of the “Scrapefoot” tale, although certainly the elements of their story that they suggest originated in the Norwegian “Snow White” (the girl finding porridge on the table, three bears who are Russian princes in disguise) are similar to the tale as most know it (Shamburger and Lachman 1946: 401–2). E.D. Phillips also seemed unaware of the other sources, following on from Lachmann and Shamburger to suggest that the Scandinavian influence comes from the Voguls of Western Siberia (Phillips 1954: 123). The story, according to Phillips, resembles the Vogul tradition of stuffing the heads of bears which have been hunted for food and honoring them by laying the stuffed heads on a table. Then, the hunters re-enacted the deaths of the bears, both apologizing for killing them and emphasizing that it was Russian iron and arrows which brought their death. Phillips believed that this similarity demonstrated an ancient sacred ritual surviving in Southey’s story (laying all credence in the fact that the tale has “three bears, that they live together in a house of their own in a wood, and that they sit at table in due order,” and also that the bears in the Norwegian “Snow White” that Shamburger and Lachmann speak of, which Southey might have heard, turn into *Russian* princes in particular). Phillips stated that “[it] is likely that such a ritual was widespread and very ancient among the peoples of the northern forests as far as Lapland and Norway” (Phillips 1954: 123). But this interpretation rests on a great number of assumptions: the assumption that the original ritual to appease the spirits of the bears was widespread, that offerings *may* have been made to them (like bowls of food), and that this tradition *may* have existed in Norway, where Southey

may have heard a similar tale to ATU 171. It does not acknowledge the existence of the story prior to Southey, even in the form of “Scrapefoot.”

“Scrapefoot the Fox” was an animal-fable variant of ATU 171 that seemed to originate earlier than Southey’s version, passed down orally. Further evidence arose that the tale was an oral tale circulating before the publications of the print versions from Southey and the anonymous “G.N.,” who further popularized the tale in verse form in 1837. This revelation came when, in 1949, Eleanor Mure’s version was found in a collection purchased by Edgar Osborne (Saint John, 1967). The little book had been crafted by Mure, hand-drawn, hand-written, and hand-bound for her nephew’s birthday, in 1831, six years before Southey published his prose version.

Though Mure seems to be relating a tale she had known previously, possibly orally, the only indicators we have of an older oral tradition are from Joseph Jacobs’ notes to “Scrapefoot the Fox,” which Jacobs included in his collection *More English Fairy Tales*. If we consider “Scrapefoot” as the earliest version, it is in part because of its reported lineage, as told by Jacobs’ informant, who heard it from an older woman, “Mrs. H”, who claimed to have heard it “from her mother” c.1854, which would have been after the publication of the most reprinted version by Southey from 1834 (Jacobs 2002: 166). The alleged transmission of the tale, however, implies that it was known long before Southey’s or Mure’s versions. Jacobs claimed that he had “now recovered this in its original form” (344–5). The supposed predating may also be in part due to the tale being more of an animal fable than a fairy tale, a genre which has implicit associations with much older tale collections (e.g. Aesop’s Fables and the medieval beast epics). “Scrapefoot” perhaps most closely resembles the medieval fable cycle of Reynard the Fox, possessing many similarities with the Reynard cycle, principally due to its similar characters. Jacobs himself published an edition of “Reynard the Fox” called *The Most Delectable History of Reynard the Fox*, and here made the connection between “Scrapefoot” and “Reynard,” although, in his remarks in *More English Fairy Tales* in 1894, he only mentions that “we may have here one more incident of the great northern beast epic of bear and fox on which Prof. Krohn has written an instructive monograph, *Bär (Wolf.) und Fuchs* (Helsingfors., 1889).” Jacobs also speculated in 1898, having revised his notes in the third edition of *English Fairy Tales*, that Southey’s version may have “changed the fox (or vixen) of the original into an old woman, and thus disguised its representative character as the last survival of the Reynard cycle in English folk-tradition” (Jacobs 1898: 242). Considering the popularity of bear-and-fox tales, as well as the impact of Reynard stories in England and elsewhere, Reynard and Scrapefoot may well have a history in common.

Reynard himself first appears in written texts as an established character in the beast epic *Ysengrimus*, c.1148, which details the feud between Ysengrimus the wolf and Reinardus the fox. Not long after, in 1174, Pierre de St. Cloud wrote Branch II of what would eventually be augmented by other authors and become the loosely-connected branches of stories that make up the *Roman de Renart*, found in 14 complete and 19 fragmented manuscripts. Through these, Reynard was brought to the forefront of beast literature, and he was so popular that in French *renard* replaced the word *goupil* for fox. Some of the branches reflect established beast fables, such as ATU 61, “The Fox Persuades the Cock to Crow with Closed Eyes,” found in Branch II, and the aetiological ATU 2, “How the Bear Lost His Tail,” found in Branch III of *Roman de Renart* which substitutes the bear for Ysengrim the wolf. Further branches explore all manner of parody, from clerical to courtly. In 1481, William Caxton translated a

version of the Reynard cycle, *The History of Reynard the Fox*, into English from a Dutch variant. It proved immensely popular, prompting re-printings, continuations, and sequels (Varty 2000: 164–9). And, importantly for the connection between Reynard and the later Scrapefoot tale, up until the nineteenth century, Reynard tales regularly entered the English market, both through editions of Caxton's text as well as through popular, though heavily adapted, chapbooks and children's books (Varty 2000: 170). This only demonstrates the text's print popularity for literate audiences; it is important to consider that, like many popular tales, Reynard's misadventures were also orally adapted, possibly leading to more dynamic changes.

Unlike beast fables, the Reynard epic(s) features named animals: Chanticleer the cock (as in Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale"), Ysengrim the wolf, King Noble the lion, Bruin the bear, and others. All possess animal characteristics, but also the ability to speak. And, indeed, they speak at length, as in branches where each animal in turn gives testimonial to King Noble against Reynard regarding the fox's devious character, strengthening the complaint of Ysengrim that Reynard destroyed his house, ate his food, urinated on his children, and raped his wife. Primarily, this section is concerned with the experience and testimony of Bruin the Bear, detailed in Branches Va and VI, in which Bruin's proclivity for honey makes him a pawn in two of Reynard's chicken-stealing schemes.

Bruin the bear is tricked twice with the promise of honey by Reynard in the *Roman*. In Branch Va, Reynard knows that Bruin is "fond of honey more than anything on Earth" and together they concoct a plan to steal a container of it (Owen 1994: 97). But midway through the plan, Reynard abandons the honey for a hen, and subsequently abandons Bruin, as well, leaving the poor bear to an angry mob. In Branch VI, Reynard tells Bruin that there is honey inside a split tree, and the bear shoves his nose inside and gets stuck: "Sir Bruin was held by the snout" – the bear is beaten, again, and tears the skin off his nose to escape (Owen 1994: 110). It is this episode which is also included and expanded upon in Caxton's translation, creating a full farce which makes the bear, with his skinned head, into a fool.

Though the beast epics are anthropomorphic in many ways, with animals possessing the power of speech and with the establishment of a court and social roles, a key element of the genre is that animals truly behave as animals – as N.F. Blake put it in the introduction to his edition of Caxton's work, "[t]he characteristic feature of medieval stories about Reynard the fox is that whereas the protagonists have human names and ranks, they nevertheless retain their animal individuality and behave in accordance with their animal nature" (Caxton 1970: xi). There are countless moments in which the animals act delightfully like animals, not simply fabular and moralistic, but with a particular *nature*. For example, in Caxton, we read of Reynard's Castle of Maleperduys (*Millepertuis*), which is indeed no human castle, but a fox's den through-and-through, with holes this way and that (Caxton 1970: 13). Food details in these tales are no less indicative of animal behavior. Reynard himself tears apart chickens as a fox, not as a man with culinary skill, table manners, or any kind of *courtesie*:

He had no use for a cloth or napkin before first breaking [a capon's] neck, then making a splendid meal out of it. By the way he eats it, it does not seem he has much affection for capons! Quite ferociously he vents his rage on that chicken, which had done him no harm. But as you are well aware, that is the way things are.

(Owen 1994: 131)

On what grounds is it possible to hypothesize a connection between the explicit tradition of the *Roman de Renart* and this new bear-and-fox tale? First, the characters themselves are reminiscent of Reynard. Scrapefoot is the trickster fox, as he transgresses in the ATU 171 tale but receives little-to-no punishment. Reynard the fox is a thief, wily and sly. Nothing is beneath him and he will trick anyone in order that he might come out of a situation alive. Like Reynard, Scrapefoot has no qualms about entering the bears' castle, eating their food, and lying across their furniture without permission. The bear character in "Reynard" is Bruin the Bear, a cousin and trusted advisor to the king of the beasts, Nobel the lion. In some installments in the Reynard epics, Bruin is driven by a desire for honey, but despite the inclusion in some versions of "The Three Bears" of the bears consuming or looking for honey, the similarity between the representations of food within the two tale cycles ends there. In the medieval epics, Bruin is upper-class, a cousin of the king, and the bears of "Scrapefoot" notably "lived in a castle in a great wood," not a cottage nor a family estate like Mure's personalized version of the nursery tale "The Three Bears" suggests. Many of the characters in the *Roman* have families, and even if Bruin's family is never a focus, we can assume that at his home, as at the home of Ysengrim the wolf, there may be a wife and children.

Second, perhaps less convincingly, there is a mention of a character called "Scratchfoot" (or "*Kratzfuss*") in Goethe's 1794 Reynard variant, *Reineke Fuchs*, which also gained immense success in its time. As observed by Holloway in the translation *Reynard the Fox: A Poem in Twelve Cantos*, the use of *Kratzfuss* by Goethe is an illustrative depiction of the motions made by hens (1852: xii). "Scrapefoot" could have derived from a similar illustrative description in relation to the digging or scraping that foxes do to create a hole or mark territory. For example, this use is found in the Scottish proverb: "He's a proud tod [fox] that winna scrape his own hole' (Wilkinson 2008: 217). However, if the tale had been disseminated orally and details had been altered to create new stories within the world of the Reynard beast fables, albeit without the titular and notorious Reynard himself, "Scratchfoot" could have become "Scrapefoot" and Bruin could have become the "great big Bear" with his family.

Finally, we must take stock of the actions that Scrapefoot takes as an intruder – he eats food that is not his, he breaks the furniture, and he sleeps in a bed that is not his own. Imagine that the tale is happening not to a bear, but to a wolf, and you have a sanitized or censored version of the crimes Reynard is accused of committing by Ysengrim the wolf. Bears and wolves are frequently found in the same roles in some fables and folktales, exchanged for one another depending on the variant. For example, in ATU 2, "How the Bear Lost His Tail," the tricked animal is sometimes a bear and other times a wolf. And, of course the Scrapefoot tale makes no mention of urinating on cubs, but it is the littlest bear whose possessions are most damaged by the fox's intrusion. Returning to what is eaten in the tale: both "Scrapefoot" and Mure's version of "The Three Bears" contain bowls of milk as the stolen food items in the tale. The bowls of milk which make up the bears' meals are not vastly different from honey in terms of their relation to Nature and Culture, discussed further below. Like honey, milk is "infraculinary," or a food that can be eaten raw in its own right, even if it is harder to keep fresh (honey, as a natural antibacterial, maintains its biological integrity, unlike milk, which spoils if not properly stored or processed).

Unlike Reynard's authors, Scrapefoot's lost storyteller is less concerned with natural accuracy and more with demonstrating how tame the bears can be. Consider that bears do not naturally drink milk once weaned; rather, we give bowls of milk to domesticated animals, so they are in a category of beast which is not fearsome, but docile.

The Reynard tales were well enough known to have some influence on almost all fox and bear beast epics, and seeped into many aspects of popular culture, so a connection is likely. There were some scholars who argued that the change was semantic, however. With regard to Southey's version being informed by "Scrapefoot," the suggestion was made by Alfred Nutt (cited in Jacobs' notes to the tale) that Southey, or indeed, another oral storyteller before him, could have misunderstood the word "vixen" in relation to "fox" and imagined the naughty intruder to be a "vixen" in a "metaphorical application to women of fox-like temper" (Jacobs 2002: 344–5). Since Mure's variant also contains an old woman, the misunderstanding (if the "Scrapefoot" version is older) would have had to have been made by someone else as the story was passed around, but, as is the nature of oral variants, there is little evidence for us to use to trace the origin of the difference. If "Scrapefoot" is the anomaly instead, perhaps the word "vixen" to mean "old woman" was misunderstood to mean "fox" – we cannot know since no earlier written texts survive containing this tale. Certainly, in the version Jacobs printed in 1894 in *More English Fairy Tales*, Scrapefoot is a male fox (like Reynard), *not* a vixen. Eugene Hammel, in his structuralist analysis, emphasized that if "Scrapefoot" is a later rather than an earlier version, it makes the point of inconsistency "even more powerfully, upsetting the entire debate in the story between Nature and Culture, animals in human roles, and a human in an animal role" (Hammel 1972: 23–4). That this powerful inconsistency would upset so many presupposed concepts of the role of animals in tales demonstrates that there is an assumed natural evolution of a story from something older, more archaic, and more primitive (that is, an animal fable) to something assumed to be more cultivated and refined (the fairy tale). This is not always the case, but it is an important consideration to keep in mind when ascribing the values of a civilizing process to tales. The tale may be 'refined' to become more accessible for each variant's audience, but development does not assign higher value.

Having traced the similarities in traditions, we may also look at shifting details, departures, and discontinuities that help to reveal the changing historical contexts of the stories. One of the most significant differences between "Scrapefoot" and Southey's "The Three Bears" is the absence of the iconic bowls of porridge at the bears' table, instead exchanged for bowls of milk. Despite being atop a laid table in a tidy, furnished house, a bowl of milk is more commonly associated with animals than people. The rationale for bowls of milk may be a practical one – despite all these domesticated behaviors, bears do not have opposable thumbs, and spoons are a difficulty. A bowl as a vessel is the closest they can get to human table manners. Or perhaps the choice is a reminder that, no matter how hard they try or how many things they can get correct, bears will never be human. Animal desires, such as *what* to eat, not just how to eat it, are impossible to replace despite a knowledge of etiquette. Notwithstanding, etiquette can be learned even by beasts, as the bears demonstrate by behaving appropriately in other ways. They, as wild animals, can move from the rough forest setting to the proper domestic house by learning to be clean, to

use furniture, and to use bowls. Without wholly subscribing to the binary oppositions found in a structural analysis, there *is* a distinct and notable difference between milk, which is closer to ‘Nature,’ and the prepared food of porridge, closer to ‘Culture’ and requiring a vessel and the use of heat or fire for preparation and a utensil for eating. Milk can be provided by any mammal without agriculture or preparation, although to have such a quantity for three bowls would be a feat for Mama Bear. Thus, eating porridge makes the bears more anthropomorphic and culturally ‘human,’ which is fitting as the tale moves from the animal fable of “Scrapefoot” and into the fairy-tale realm of “Goldilocks” in which animals behave more like people, in a way unsurprising to the people interacting with them.

The symbolic functions of porridge in this story may also be related to its association with children. As stated before, this story has a relatively isolated origin in both time and place, which allows the contextual understanding of the story to be identified with nineteenth-century England and the pre-Victorian and Victorian outlook on children and diet. This was a time when the concept of “the child” and “childhood” was newly emerging. Didactic tales were beginning to take a more prominent and explicit role in instructing children and governing nursery behavior. This tale is a prime example of how fairy tales and the fairy-tale world can be used to describe and model a role for the intended audience. In this case, the audience is the child, the Wee Bear in the tale is the exemplary model, and Goldilocks or the intruder is a demonstration of negative, inappropriate behavior.

This story, in this way, seeks to ‘civilise’ its child readers, reflecting an application of fairy tales that was widespread in Europe during the nineteenth century, and that has been dated back at least as far as the emergence of the courtly fairy tale in France (see Zipes 1982: 313–4; and Mennell 1992: 38). As Tatar has observed, the bears are “models of decorum,” and may be contrasted didactically with the naughty old woman or little girl who are “uncouth intruders” (Tatar 2002: 247, n.1). The bears are also clean, patient (waiting for their porridge to cool), not greedy (with each having just what their size requires in terms of bowl, chair, and bed), and represent a perfect family unit. Even in versions where the family roles are not explicit, the biggest bear behaves with appropriate masculinity like a father, the middle bear is gentle like a mother, and the Wee Bear does everything a good child should. The child listener must strive to be like the Wee Bear, not Goldilocks, the old woman, or Scrapefoot.

To understand why porridge was chosen for the nineteenth-century child, we must situate ourselves within the particular conceptions of pre-Victorian and Victorian children. In this period, significant ideological changes took place as industrialization and urbanization took hold, ‘modernizing’ Britain. Authors such as Dickens, writing after the middle of the nineteenth century, drew attention to the vast disparities between the social classes. They were writing for receptive audiences, who possibly would not have been so eager to read about (and care about) the impoverished at the turn of the nineteenth century, and it took time for these tastes to change. Although the early Victorian era possibly maintained more values that align with the message and meaning of ATU 171 in its inherent didacticism, class indicators, and culinary asceticism for children, the child-rearing views of the latter half of this period are also relevant due to the tale’s persistence in popular culture and nursery tradition. As explored above in relation to the possibly much older (maybe medieval) origins

of the tale in “Scrapefoot,” it cannot be said this tale is *unequivocally* Victorian or nineteenth-century British, but it can be asserted that the tale’s renown took firm hold at that time.

As Zipes says in his preface to *Victorian Fairy Tales*, “Victorian fairy-tale writers always had two ideal audiences in mind when they composed their tales – young middle-class readers whose minds and morals they wanted to influence, and adult middle-class readers whose ideas they wanted to challenge and reform” (Zipes 1991: xi). Zipes also quotes from a Romantic period text from 1820 entitled *The Governess, or the Little Female Academy* by a Mrs Sherwood:

Instruction when conveyed through the medium of some beautiful story or pleasant tale, more easily insinuates itself into the youthful mind than any thing of a drier nature; yet the greatest care is necessary that the kind of instruction thus conveyed should be perfectly agreeable to the Christian dispensation.

(Zipes 1991: xvi–xvii)

Perhaps in part due to the fact that a good deal of socialized schooling took place in religious Sunday schools, instituted during the Georgian period so that “every poor child in [George III]’s dominions should be taught to read the bible,” this kind of Christian value permeated activities associated with learning (Bratton 1981: 14–16). However, the emphasis on writing a “beautiful story or pleasant tale” to get across these messages persisted. There was thus a growing desire for moralistic instructional tales as well as the kind of fantastical children’s literature and imported fairy tales that pushed back against these didactic values. Before *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* came out in 1865, moral tales were still the nursery status quo: “Indeed, the instinct to teach, to improve, to warn and rebuke is one of the most striking features of a great many books for Victorian children, whether such instruction was directly applied or sugar-coated with fiction” (Roe 1959: 91). And so, the taste for moral didacticism and experiences of wonder resulted in tales like “The Three Bears,” which combine both elegantly. Hans Christian Andersen produced a similar effect, with tales “which combined fantasy with a moral impulse in line with traditional Christian standards,” and which “guaranteed the legitimacy of the literary fairy tale for middle-class audiences” (Zipes 1991: xviii).

Other popular children’s literature of the time is iconic in many ways: it often utilized nature and other worlds to help child protagonists progress from childhood to adulthood, played with notions of obedience and role reversal (the child acting as the adult, for example, as Alice must do in Wonderland since the adults around her seem to act “mad”), and idealized childhood in terms of innocence and wide-eyed curiosity. The food details in these books provide some of the most memorable scenes, yet they often engage with luxury, feasting, and over-abundant indulgence despite the importance given to austere eating. Why, then, are the earlier nursery tales, such as “The Three Bears,” better representations of both the mundane and everyday diet and also the message of nursery asceticism? Though the story persisted throughout the Victorian era, “The Three Bears” comes from a slightly stricter time, predating some of the other fantastical young adult and children’s literature we often associate with the Victorians. Furthermore, in many later children’s novels, the feasting takes place in “other worlds,” not the family home where food behaviors were expected to be

more regular. Mure's tale of "The Three Bears" is a telling adaptation in this respect, in that she sets it in the family's own house, making the setting of the story familiar so that her nephew will connect it with pleasure at seeing his family home. On the other hand, stories where characters like Alice go to other worlds like Wonderland give permission to do things which fall outside of the norm; she can eat cake whenever she feels the desire (although there are some side effects) and can flaunt mealtime rules.

What nineteenth-century daily eating habits does "The Three Bears" reflect, then? The diets of the children of the emergent middle-class were greatly impacted by their parents' desire to follow social rules and demonstrate that they, as a family, exhibited appropriate behaviors, including eating behaviors. This results in rather severe eating restrictions, as Pamela Horn observes:

In professional circles there was concern to train children to accept Spartan living conditions. Gwen Raverat, whose father was a don at Cambridge University, remembered the austere meals that were served. For breakfast, there was porridge with salt, not sugar, and milk to drink. Jam was regarded as a "dangerous luxury", as was butter.

(Horn 1997: 21)

Victorian food for children "was often used as a means to teach children moderation, discipline, selflessness, and virtuousness in general," and it follows that literature reflected these values (Broomfield 2007: 47). Household guides, such as the famous *Mrs. Beeton's Guide to Household Management* instruct on appropriate nursery care, dictating diet and putting in place strict rules for the health of children (Beeton 1869: 1621–32). Oatmeal, and other bland or lightly sweetened farinaceous dishes such as gruels, boiled arrowroot, and tapioca were popular for infants and children, being considered 'appropriately' healthy. Thus, in "The Three Bears," the porridge itself stands in as both a literal bowl of porridge and a vehicle for communicating ideas about which foods were considered "correct" and "good" for certain under-privileged groups in a time of moralized eating and appetite. As the quotation demonstrates above, porridge was not necessarily just for the poor and impoverished children; although it may have "belonged" to that class, it became an indicator of the powerlessness of middle- and upper-class children who had ascetic food choice dictated to them. Since porridge was an anticipated part of all children's diets at the time, imparting the lesson of its goodness through literature makes sense.

Thus, Mure's intention in giving her nephew a gift of "The Tale of the Three Bears" is not necessarily consciously manipulative; rather, she (and perhaps the nephew, when he was told the tale aloud) most probably identified with the quaint bears and their good behavior, teaching her nephew to be like the littlest bear through positive association with the beloved animals. She may have felt that she wielded the power of a "literary object," similar to the way in which Sarah Trimmer's 1786 children's book, *The History of the Robins*, used children's observations about a family of robins as a vehicle for teaching children about virtues and vices, as well as emphasizing a less metaphorical message about the treatment of animals. However, when story of the three bears was adapted to be more widespread in the Victorian nursery (working from the premise that "Scrapefoot" is a previous incarnation which descended from the medieval beast fable tradition), two notable things changed to make the tale more

accessible to children: the change of the milk to porridge and the transformation, after Scrapefoot disappears and the human intruder emerges, from an old woman to a little girl.

Prior to the change from an old lady to child, the most important model in the tale for children was the Wee Bear – one can imagine Mure pointedly nodding at her nephew when the Wee Bear acts. This does not change when the tale switches to the young intruder. The bears still function as exemplars of suitable conduct, but the tale now portrays both good behavior and bad behavior from two young characters, who, despite being different species, are from the same social group. Hence, the tale can be used to point out the child's *bad* behavior as much as praising and demonstrating the good behavior. Goldilocks and the Wee Bear are not representative of two separate people, acting as rival siblings, as Bruno Bettelheim believes (Bettelheim 1976: 223–4). Rather, they represent the child's choice about behaving according to the rules or not. On the one hand, the child can choose to be the naughty Goldilocks, who is punished for her wrongdoings in the majority of variants. On the other, he or she can choose to be the Wee Bear, for whom the child may gain sympathy as the story progresses. The supposed age similarity between a young bear and a young girl forms an obvious binary opposition. It is possible that the story's evolution into modern variants that focus more heavily on Goldilocks has begun to provoke gleeful responses from children who can live vicariously through her, rather than indignant reactions to her disobedience. The message about behavior, however, rings more clearly when examples of both are demonstrated in relatable characters clearly assigned as 'good' and 'bad.'

The iterations of this tale can be traced through their historically- and culturally-specific details, leading us to see a history of influence longer than that which had been naturally assumed about this tale. Although "The Three Bears" seems to be a fixed classic, we can see that even such a particular tale as this is not without borrowed elements with a deeper past and a myriad of variants. It reminds us that even details indelibly etched on our childhood memories are changed in different contexts, they do not stay sacred to our own nursery feelings, and, in these different contexts, they can sometimes change in meaning even when the words seem to remain the same. In another century and a half, the bowl of porridge may disappear, and I wonder: what will the bears eat then?

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CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

“NO FAIRY TALES OF THEIR OWN?” The English and the fairy tale from Thoms to Jacobs



Jonathan Roper

In October 1891, London played host to the Second International Folklore Congress. The First Congress had been held in Paris two years earlier. Distinguished folklorists from Britain, Europe, and America gathered to discuss the latest developments and discoveries in their field. One of the speakers, Joseph Jacobs, prepared a magnificent map of “Folk-tale Europe” to illustrate his talk. His organizing principle for this map was to put “the names of authors of collections instead of the names of towns. Thus, where Halle stands in ordinary maps, in my map stands the name of Grimm” (1892: 80). Jacobs, who had just published a collection of English tales that opened with the combative words “Who says the English have no fairy tales of their own?”, placed the following names in the territory of England: Anna Eliza Bray, James Halliwell, Sabine Baring Gould, William Henderson, Robert Hunt, William Bottrell, Marie Clothilde Balfour, and Charlotte Burne. At a distance of more than a century, there is little to fault in his choice of English folktale collectors. There were one or two more names he would no doubt have added if he had drawn up the map in 1914 rather than 1891, and perhaps we would swap the name of Balfour (whose tales have been questioned, e.g. by Neil Philip, who speaks of “real doubt as to the authenticity of the material” 1992: 156) for that of Vincent Thomas Sternberg. But Jacobs’ list of names essentially stands. And so, we will begin our chapter by surveying the English folktale collectors and their work in chronological order of their chief publications, and in the second half of the chapter we shall discuss some of the issues flagged up in the course of that review.

THE COLLECTORS

There are many hints of the existence of folktales in early modern England, which Tom Pettitt surveys in his piece on the subject (2010), and which Charlotte Artese treats with respect to Shakespeare (2015). As Adam Fox points out (2000), even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the oral tradition in England was rubbing up against and interacting with written traditions. The sea change in attitudes toward folklore, which means the texts of folk narratives begin to be recorded, comes, as elsewhere in Europe, later, with Romanticism. The poet Robert Southey’s interest in folklore, so typical of his era, is evident in both his notebooks and his poems (e.g.

“The Witch,” “Donica”). He is also the author of the tale many of us may not expect to have an author, or at least not such a recent one given its accession to the corpus of children’s tales, namely “The Three Bears” (see Briggs 1965). And while he himself did not collect folklore in the way that contemporary poets in other European countries did (one thinks of Goethe collecting folksongs in Alsace, for instance), he did instigate some collection of folklore by his friend the novelist Anna Eliza Bray (1790–1883), the first in Jacobs’ list of collectors to have their works appear in print. Bray was the wife of the vicar of Tavistock, himself a keen antiquary. Southey in a letter to her in 1831 suggested she pursue the task of providing “what English literature yet wants,” namely: “a good specimen of local history, not the antiquities, nor the natural history ... nor the statistics, but everything about a parish that can be made interesting – all of its history, traditions and manners” (1836: 2).

And Bray duly produced such a work in three volumes within five years: *A Description of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamar and the Tavy; its Natural History, Manners, Customs, Superstitions, Scenery, Antiquities, Biography of Eminent Persons, etc. in a Series of Letters to Robert Southey, Esq.* (Bray 1836). This capacious title is an accurate representation of the very broad contents of the book. At least some of the assorted letters touch on folklore: one deals with popular legends about Sir Francis Drake, another with pixie legends. A French observer was led to comment that the fairy legends Bray reports are “dans une forme non populaire, il est vrai, mais avec beaucoup de charme,” which is a fair summary (Bruyère 1875: xvi). Bray rephrases what must have been the original words of the tales quite extensively, nevertheless in the opinion of the historian of the British folklore movement, Richard Dorson, “her method of discussing local traditions directly rather than embroidering them in fictional sketches was new ... [and from such a] mixed brew to a volume wholly concerned with local traditions was an easy step” (Dorson 1965: xiii).

James Halliwell (1820–1889) (later known as James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips) was not himself a field collector, but a library man. In 1849, he published his *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales of England*. This book was modelled on Robert Chambers’ collection of Scottish rhymes which in later editions included “Fireside Nursery Tales,” a form of words that Halliwell adopted for his own collection. But Halliwell’s claim that his and Chambers’ books taken together “will eventually contain nearly all that is worth preserving of what may be called the national literature of Great Britain” was wildly mistaken (1849: viii). Most of the work was given over to the rhymes, but there were also 21 tales. Halliwell adapted many of these from chapbooks, e.g. the tale of “The Three Heads of the Well” was abridged “from the old chap-book of the The Three Kings of Colchester” (1849: 39). Given that these cheap books from the early modern era contain much in the way of popular literature, this was a useful move. On the other hand, it is to be regretted that only four of the tales he printed were explicitly specified as being from oral tradition. We are given no information about the informants, only that they came from Oxfordshire, Yorkshire, the West Country, and one unspecified locale. On the plus side, Halliwell’s learning enabled him to identify analogues of the tales he printed – he recognized that “Mr Vinegar” was an analogue of the German “Hans im Glück,” that “Chicken Licken” had a Scottish analogue, and that “Mally Dixon” had a match in the Danish tale “Knurre-Murre.” Halliwell’s work thus represents one of the first attempts to place English tales in their European context.

A figure whose importance has only recently been recognized (Roper 2014) in recent years is Vincent Thomas Sternberg (1831–1880). His book, *The Dialect and Folk-Lore of Northamptonshire* (1851) contains various fairy legends from that county. Shortly afterwards, he issued a bold call in the pages of the folklore-friendly periodical *Notes and Queries* for the nationwide collection of English folktales. The call seems not to have been successful, but in the course of promoting it, he published further stories from the English midlands (1852). His German family background (his grandfather had come over to England from the continent), and his reading of Grimm, allowed him to draw on parallels from the continent for these English tales some of which he said sound “like an echo from a German story-book” (1853: 95).

In 1866, William Henderson (1813–1891) published his work on the folklore of “the Northern Counties.” As with other regional folklore collections of that time, it included discussion of lifecourse customs, seasonal events, spells, and divinations, and so on. But it also included local narratives about “The Lambton Worm” and other dragons, for instance, or about “The Hedley Kow,” and other bogies. Given this is a book concentrating on Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland, it is somewhat of a surprise to find tales from Devon in the work’s penultimate chapter and its Appendix. This is a result of Henderson’s contact with Sabine Baring Gould (1834–1924), who had been born in Devon and who would return to live there, but was currently serving as a curate in Yorkshire. Baring Gould had already published some “Household Tales” in *Notes and Queries* in the previous year (1865) together with the already time-honored complaint regarding the low number of English wonder tales – and a time-honored attempt to stir up interest. But Baring Gould was not to be an English Grimm. As the decades of his long life passed, his enthusiasm for folktales would wane as his love for folksongs grew, and it is in the field of folksong collection that this remarkable polymath (who was also a novelist, translator, hagiographer, hymn-writer, amongst other things) felt he made his greatest contribution. Nevertheless, the young Baring Gould’s interest in folktale had led him to drawing up a provisional indexing system for internationally known tales, published at the back of Henderson’s book.

Perhaps the most striking of the collectors was Robert Hunt (1807–1887), a man with a scientific rather than a literary background. In his youth, convalescing in Cornwall, he traveled about the area and “elicited the old stories of which the people were beginning to be ashamed” (1865: x). His “old Cornwall” included Devon up until Exeter, and his historical viewpoint led him to group “prehistoric” stories of giants and demons in his first volume, and historic traditions in his second. As a mineralogist, many of his informants for these tales were local miners. For unclear reasons, Hunt waited over a third of a century before finally publishing his collection in 1865. William Bottrell (1816–1881) also collected in Cornwall, and indeed contributed some stories to Hunt’s book, though we are not told which. But upon being asked by a local newspaper to present his own tales, he began a column that later became a multi-part book (1870, 1873, 1880). From time-to-time we find the same story in both Hunt and Bottrell, and when we do it is usually a fair bit longer in Bottrell. Whether this better reflects local storytelling practice or is a result of Bottrell’s literary style is a moot question.

Charlotte Burne (1850–1923) is named as the editor rather than the compiler of *Shropshire Folklore* (1883–1886), but her introduction to that work signals that

she also did make contributions of her own to a work which must be seen as being substantially the work of Georgina Jackson (1823/4–1895). Jackson had already compiled one of the most substantial local dialect glossaries focused on a single county, but now an invalid, she gave over the folklore materials she had collected for Burne to work up in to a book. Between them, the two women produced perhaps the most substantial of the nineteenth-century county folklore books. As is typical with such works, their focus is local folklore as a whole, rather than just the narrower field of popular narration.

To conclude our survey of those who sought genuine English tales from the mouths of the people and from the manuscripts of earlier days, we can note that the year before the International Folklore Congress of 1891, the first three sizable anthologies of English folktales were published, all of which drew at least in part on the work of the collectors we have listed above (Hartland 1890; Jacobs 1890; Tibbits 1890). In a sense, this was the year that the English folktale can be said to have become an established *literary* category, somewhat later than in most other countries of Europe, but all the same the country was no longer a blank space in the cartography of Folktale Europe.

In the years after the Congress two more important works appeared. Sidney Oldall Addy (1848–1933) published *Household Tales with other Traditional Remains*, a work, as the title suggests, in the Grimmian mode. Dorson deems him the only collector other than Hunt “to concentrate on tales” (1965: xiv). The particular attention that he gives the tales is Grimmian in another sense too. Addy was careful not to embroider his texts: “The Clean Fairy and the Dirty Fairy” simply stops after the heroine has completed her third impossible task, with him noting “[t]he story does not end here, but my informant has forgotten the rest” (1895: 17). Not many Victorian writers would have resisted the temptation of drawing upon analogous tales (Addy himself (1895: 16) notes the existence of three similar tales in the Grimms’ own *Household Tales*) to form a ‘complete’ text. Addy also has tales with Jack as the hero, “Jack and the Butter-Milk” and “The Little Red Hairy Man,” of the kind that survived longer in English-speaking North America than in England itself. His stories mostly came from Derbyshire, but also from the adjoining counties of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Yorkshire.

Someone who represented a more broad-brush approach to local lore was Ella Mary Leather (1874–1928). Her researches in Herefordshire (1912) turned up tales, along with all sorts of other genres and practices, and she dedicates a rich chapter to them, albeit only 17 pages in length. She too presents tales with Jack as the hero (though sometimes this is Jack o’ Kent, a local trickster hero), including a memorable version of “Jack and the Giantkiller.” Like Addy she resists giving us composite texts, noting at one point: “This is the first mention of Jack. I noted the story as related; probably some of it was forgotten” (1912: 175). Leather also gives us a hint as to her collecting practice: “it is well to *carry samples*, for your old countryman loves to hear a story: having it heard, he longs to tell you one as good, or better” (1912: xvi).

And it is worth noting that English folktales also appear in a scattered range of other sources besides the compendia mentioned above, for instance in the local press. One of the best English tales, “Tom Tit Tot” (an analogue of “Rumpelstiltskin”) first appeared in the pages of the *Ipswich Journal* in 1878. Another highly distinctive story, “Mr Fox,” appeared in the unlikely location of the notes to *Much Ado About*

Nothing in an 1821 edition of Shakespeare. Other locations where English folktales were found (and may still be found if the sources are scoured more fully) include places such as memoirs, the appendices to dialect dictionaries, antiquarian journals, local newspapers, and a dozen other comparable places. The second half of this chapter will look at some of the issues that arise when we examine the material mentioned within the foregoing survey. These issues are sources, textualization, genre, juvenalization, region, and nation.

SOURCES

Who told the tales that we find in the books in the survey above? While assiduous detective work (e.g. Rölleke 2011) has revealed who the Grimms' informants were, we are virtually in the dark as to who the tellers of the English equivalents of the Grimms' tales were. Addy, who in other aspects of his practice is the most contemporary of these folktale collectors, gives us only the name of the villages he heard the tales in. He does not give the storytellers' names, or even general information about their age, sex, or station in life. Leather names several of her informants including an 80-year-old man in the local workhouse, William Colcombe (on this see Pettitt 2013). There is scattered information in some of the other collectors' writings too. Robert Hunt portrays the droll-teller, 'Uncle' Anthony James, and Georgina Jackson mentions Mrs Sarah Dudley of Much Wenlock who knew "queer old-world stories" (Burne 1883: 149).

One great commonality is that many of these stories came via nurses. Hartland heard the story "A Son of Adam" from his nurse. Indeed, it may well be the only direct experience of traditional narratives that this expert on international folktales had was via his nurse. There were many other distinguished figures who heard oral narratives from their nurses, not the least of whom was Charles Dickens, who heard tales such as "Captain Murderer" from his nurse, Mary Weller. The nurse, older, female, working class, telling a traditional tale to the child, younger, male, middle class, is a classical scene in the records we have of English folklore. It represented cultural contact between the opposite points of the demographic spectrum. This shared cultural capital might be called to mind by the now-grown man, when spurred by the writings of Grimm and his followers to see such 'trivial' or 'juvenile' material as valuable. Hence, the odd English usage of 'nursery tale' or 'nurse tale' for such narratives, which might better be called 'popular tales' or 'folktales.' Similarly, 'nursery rhymes' might be better called 'popular rhymes' or 'folk rhymes.' Halliwell's 1849 title *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales* was halfway there.

It is not to be imagined that this was the only format in which folktales were transmitted; for all its prominence in the records, it may even have been quite an atypical format in practice. Ethnographic evidence from the English diaspora suggests that in isolated communities in the days before television it was adult-to-adult narration of folktales that was the norm, with children only permitted, if at all, on sufferance (Halpert and Widdowson 1996). Flora Thompson, in the chapter of *Lark Rise* (1939) entitled "Men Afield," writes that at lunch agricultural labourers would sometimes:

while away the time in repeating what the women spoke of with shamed voices as "men's tales." ... Judging by a few stray specimens which leaked through the

channel of eavesdropping juniors, they consisted chiefly of “he said” and “she said,” together with a lavish enumeration of those parts of the human body then known as “the unmentionables.”

(Thompson 1939: 55)

These tales were presumably like the ones Afanasyev found in Russia (but could not himself publish), the so-called “forbidden tales” (Afanasyev 1970) or like the ones that Vance Randolph found in English-speaking North America in the twentieth century (e.g. Randolph 1976). Though Thompson says nothing on the matter, we might suspect that in at least some circles there were similarly bawdy ‘women’s tales.’ Some of Randolph’s bawdy tales were related by women, for instance.

Adult-to-child storytelling also existed beyond the inter-class nurse-child nexus. Laboring class adult-to-child tale tellings are represented by John Clare in works such as *The Shepherd’s Calendar* (1827). Given that, as one historian has noted “in almost every case, the county chronicler relied on his house servants and neighbourly acquaintances for oral texts, and did nothing so rude as to barge uninvited into the village pub or visit with quayside loungers, threshing farmers, or miners in the collieries” (Dorson 1968: 332), it is clear that our picture today cannot be a complete one. We can borrow a device from Vladimir Papernyj (2011 [1996], later taken up in folklore studies by Panchenko 2012) and speak of the oral narrative tradition of nineteenth-century England as T_1 and the tradition as it is reflected in the publications of scholars and publicists as T_2 . The matter is ultimately unknowable, but it would seem highly likely that T_2 is a mere fraction of T_1 .

TEXTUALIZATION

How did the spoken words of the tales become the printed words that we now have? This is the question of textualization. All of the collectors named above were working without the benefit of sound-recording. And none of them seems to have developed a shorthand of the form that the great figure of the following period of folk narrative collection in England, the gypsy tale specialist T.W. Thompson, did to record his material. We also cannot always be sure, due to the silence about their collection practices, whether they followed his example of setting down a complete and correct record of the tales “within a very few days of their narration” (Thompson cited in Philip 1992: xix). In this they differ little from many of nineteenth-century collectors elsewhere in Europe, but all these factors place powerful restrictions on how well their written texts could reflect the living speech of the storytellers.

Another difficulty was the desire to present ‘good stories,’ which were easy to follow in print. To this end, writers would present composite and adapted texts – few could resist this temptation the way that Addy and Leather seem to have done. Jacobs for one was explicit about his practice: “In a few instances I have introduced or changed an incident” (1890: xi). And what to do about dialect, the form many of these tales were told in? If the writers wanted a general readership, then rewriting was the answer. Once again, we have the testimony of Jacobs: “In the majority of instances I have had largely to rewrite these Fairy Tales, especially those in dialect. ... Children, and sometimes those of larger growth, will not read dialect” (1890: x).

Likewise, Robert Hunt states he altered the tales he heard “from the vernacular ... into modern language” (1865: xxiii). And Charlotte Burne also “modified the dialect very considerably” (1883: ix). This was unfortunate as Jackson had worked hard with her written representation of dialect (her preface records her revising her texts for four years). While a million miles from the professionalism of Boas and his school in their early twentieth-century work with native Americans, we nevertheless can aver that in England it was those whose interest was primarily linguistic rather than literary who provided some of the more convincing tale texts, albeit even fewer in number, as with Jesse Salisbury (1893) or Sarah Hewett (1892).

Of course, it is often hard to know what got lost in the textualization process, though there are some cases where we can have a good guess. When Sternberg begins a tale like this: “Once upon a time, just before the monkey tribe gave up the nauseous custom of chewing tobacco ...” (1852: 601), he is presumably providing a rendition of an original something like this:

Once upon a time (and a very good time it was)
When pigs were swine
And dogs ate lime
And monkeys chewed tobacco ...

In other words, an opening similar to the one Leather (1912: 174) recorded from William Colcombe six decades later. Not only has he rendered the rhyme as prose, he has altered the register from the folk-cultural to something altogether more arch. Jacobs speaks of the “colloquial-romantic tone” of the English tales, but quite how that tone manifested itself is hard to tell from the texts we have (1890: x). The weaknesses of folktale textualization in Victorian England make it difficult for us to make any sound observations about oral folktale style.

GENRE

Writing about the English folk narrative tradition, Stith Thompson remarked: “Popular narrative has had a tendency to take the form of the ballad” (1946: 19). Consider for example our records of Robin Hood. Almost all of the older stories about him took the form of ballads rather than prose. Another demonstration of the strength of the ballad tradition (or speaking more broadly, the folk verse narrative tradition) is that some stories can be found both in sung and in spoken forms, such as ATU 992 which appears as the ballad “King John and the Bishop” and as the prose narrative “The Independent Bishop of Worcester” (Leather 1912: 177). But Jacobs is surely going too far when he says, “I have also rescued and retold a few Fairy Tales that only exists nowadays in the form of ballads.” What evidence did he have that these ballads were once prose? Nevertheless, even in the twentieth century, Katharine Briggs would follow the same practice of prosifying song texts in her four-volume compendium of folktales (1970). Of course, as Jacobs points out, various English narratives were *cante fable* in form, i.e. prose narratives with verses at key points, but that is not unusual internationally – it is also true of stories we find in the Grimms’ collection (and widely elsewhere in world).

Another question of genre is the lines we draw within prose narratives. Ever since the Grimms’ collection was published two centuries ago a line has been drawn

between stories which are more poetic and stories which are more historical, between *Märchen* and *Sagen*, between wonder tales and legends. In practice, there is somewhat of a continuum. For example, Halpert has noted that in practice in anglophone North America the sharp theoretical distinction between wonder tale and legend is to some extent neutralized (Halpert and Widdowson 1996: liii). Jacqueline Simpson (2008) has observed that while there are numerous local narratives about the killing of a dragon, and none of these feature a rescued princess. In other words, the legend matches the core motif of a wonder tale but lacks its other motifs. But for all these quibblings, we all feel the difference between narratives which start with a bang and feature implausible events in a never-never land, and those narratives that arise in conversation and are put over as happening in places we know and to friends of friends. The corpus of English popular prose narrative is dominated by the latter to an extent that is rare in mainland European records, or for that matter in the records of our Scottish and Irish neighbors. For some this has been a matter of regret. Writing in 1865, Baring Gould expressed what might be termed ‘*Märchen* envy’:

It is of great importance that the household tales of England should be collected, as they have been collected in France, in Germany, in Russia, in Greece, in Scotland, &c.

...

Our antiquarian collectors of folk lore have hitherto searched for legends, superstitions, and charms; let them diligently seek out true household tales.

(1865: 82)

And yet this feeling was never uncomfortable enough to drive anyone to a large scale dedicated collecting program. To be sure, authors based in London would issue pleas for folktales to be sent to them, but they were not about to put themselves out in search of *Märchen*. The example of Baring Gould is striking. He exerted himself sufficiently to collect maybe half-a-dozen *Märchen* (including the excellent story “The Rose Tree”), but for folksong he was willing to search for decades.

JUVENALIZATION

William Thoms, the man who coined the word ‘folklore,’ also produced storybooks for children. If we can go by his use of a pseudonym for publishing children’s books he seems to have been somewhat bashful that he did so, retelling in some instances stories he had printed as reading for adults (1828): *Gammer Gurton’s Famous Histories* (Merton 1846a) and *Gammer Gurton’s Pleasant Stories* (1846b). But this juvenalization of the material was far from uncommon. To take some of our collectors, Mrs Bray retold some of her tales from *Tamar and Tavy* in *A Peep at the Pixies* (1854), and Baring Gould published an anthology for children, *Old English Fairy Tales* to “give English children ... [tales] told in my old way, and in most cases expanded, as I have seen fit” (1895: 6). Andrew Lang, otherwise a leading folklore theorist, was also the author of the various colored Fairy Books, which retold tales for children. And it is no accident that Joseph Jacobs’ anthology, for all its fine comparative notes in its closing pages, is to be found in the children’s literature departments of bookshops. And this is fair enough given that he stated his main object was “to give

a book of English Fairy Tales which English children will listen to” (1895: x). The inclusion of illustrations in his edition was another aspect of the turning of popular narratives in children’s literature. Juvenalization is also commercialization, with all that implies. Thus, the spread of folk and fairy motifs in the twentieth and twenty-first century to a wide range of media and in many commercial adaptations can also be said to have nineteenth-century roots.

REGION AND NATION

Why did Jacobs even raise the question of whether the English had any fairy tales of their own? It partly relates to the question of genre touched on above – while there are countless English *Sagen* (and a good number can still be heard today), there are relatively few English *Märchen*. Or to put it into less technical language, while there are many English tales about ghosts, witches, land- and water-spirits (‘fairies’), and about local heroes and villains (many anthologized in Simpson and Westwood, 2005), there are few records of English tales of the Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood or Puss in Boots type. And given the nature of the aesthetic established by Perrault and by the Grimms, where magical tales have the greatest kudos (i.e. the tales that specialists refer to under the ATU types 300–749), this can be seen as a shortcoming. There was certainly an appetite for such narratives in nineteenth-century England, if we consider the popularity of Edgar Taylor’s translations of the Grimms (1823) and George Webbe Dasent’s translations of the Norwegian equivalents of the Grimms, Asbjørnsen and Moe (1859), not to mention that of the works of Hans Christian Andersen or of *The Arabian Nights* (more on the English reception of these works can be found in Schacker 2004).

The historian of the folklore movement, Richard Dorson, has remarked “[t]he English would perform their greatest feats of collecting in faraway lands” (1968: 331). And it is striking that English people were collecting traditional narratives in other countries, both within the British Empire, in India, and in Africa, for example, and also within Europe, in Italy, the Basque country, and Greece, with an energy and dedication that was often absent at home. Some people, again usually based in London, thought that there was little left to collect in England itself. At mid-century Halliwell pondering over “traditional literature” (as he called it), suggested that “it may be that little of this now remains in England,” but the remark is most relevant for his admission of ignorance about the situation (1849: 275). William Ralston, the translator of Afanasyev’s Russian folktales, writing in 1878 about the situation in England felt that “it is to be feared that that it is now too late to remedy the neglect from which they have suffered” (1878: 71).

Two decades later, Addy wrote when presenting the 52 stories he had successfully collected in half-a-dozen years of research that “many more of them must be embedded in the memories of the people” (1895: ix–x). This judgement of an experienced collector, the most successful scholarly English folktale collector of the entire Victorian era, should be heeded. John Francis Campbell, the most successful Scottish folktale collector of that same era, and a man also well acquainted with England, thought the same: “Mr. Campbell is inclined to think that many English folktales still exist, though it may not be easy to discover them” (Ralston 1878: 71). It seems that much went unrecorded in England because researchers did not make

the efforts to seek them out. As Addy ruefully noted “the collection of these things usually falls to the lot of those who are otherwise busy” (1895: x).

When we consider the collection and publication of English folktales in a European context, what really strikes the reader is the comparative absence of nationalism in the paratexts of the collections. This is due to a variety of factors. England was the dominant nation within a multinational state and at the center of a global empire with outposts on every continent. There was no need to co-opt folklore for an independence struggle or to use it as part of the cultural justification of a new nation state. The English language was in no sense an endangered one, and it had a long literary history dating back a millennium, as texts first published in the nineteenth century such as *Beowulf* attested, and the literary tradition featured universally recognized figures such as Shakespeare. Folktales were thus not being sought as part of language documentation or revitalization projects, or to bolster up the native element of an incipient literary culture. In Dundes’ terms, there was no “national inferiority complex” to spur the cultivation of folk narrative (1985: 12). Social factors, such as relatively early mass semi-literacy, urbanization, industrialization, secularization, and so on, meant that England was in a Weberian sense a much more disenchanted polity than many other locations in Europe or the wider world. This may have a connection with the comparative absence of wonder tales in England (though one might equally argue that a disenchanted society might have a greater appetite for fantasy, but found it in high literature or in visual art rather than in folklore). There was also, sociologically speaking, and this point is sometimes neglected, no resident alloglossic upper class of the sort that is often key in the establishment in broader consciousness of local folklore as a thing that might be worthy of documentation and cultivation, as for example the Baltic Germans in Latvia and Estonia, or the Anglo-Irish in Ireland.

When we examine the titles of the collections containing folktales it is not the national but the regional note that we notice, whether they be broad regions such as ‘the Northern Counties’ or individual counties, as with Northamptonshire, Devonshire, or Shropshire. Grimmian cultural nationalists like Thoms (Roper 2008) were the exception, rather than the rule. The regional collectors could have presented the material they had collected in their own locality *sub specie* the national, but they did not feel the need to. And yet, the three anthologists who published in the year immediately before (and quite possibly in anticipation of) the International Folklore Congress of 1891 all used the word ‘England’ in their title. Why this sudden burst of the national? Partly it was a question of critical mass, enough material had been accumulated by the porers-over of early books and manuscripts and the regional collectors to make such works possible. (The only compiler who had presented a supposedly national collection before was Halliwell, presumably in emulation of the national title of his model, and his 21 tale corpus could hardly be thought of as a nationally representative one; he himself said it was “not as extensive as could have been wished (1849: ix), and asked readers to communicate “additions” to him). And partly, it was because none of these works was truly self-standing, but were parts of series which covered a series of nations. Hartland’s work was in the Camelot library and issued uniform with collections of the tales of Scotland and Ireland, Tibbits’ anthology was one among a series whose other members included Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and Jacobs also edited books of Celtic and Indian fairy tales with the same publishers he issued his English collections with. In this sense, the invocation of the national is due to the

demands of publishers working with a tradition where the national had already been established as the appropriate frame to present folk narrative in.

Even the adoption of a national frame does not necessarily imply nationalism. To read the probing introduction Hartland wrote to his national folktale collection, and then to read the prefaces of George Douglas or of William Butler Yeats in the same series is to enter another mental world, with Douglas speaking of a “fragrance which hung about [the stories] in their native air, their native soil” (1893: 7) or Yeats’ talk of “the innermost heart of the Celt” (1893: xv). We might also note that while Douglas and Yeats both attack the “tabulation” of tales, Hartland speaks of “what real students of folk-lore are doing” (1891: xxiii). Indeed, Hartland was so concerned with getting it right that he modified the given title of the series “Folk and Fairy Tales” in his instance to “Fairy and Other Folk Tales,” to underline the point that fairy tales are a subclass of folktale rather than, as the original would imply, a different category of thing.

Though Jacobs promised in passing to write a monograph on the English folktale (“I hope on some future occasion to treat the subject of the English Folk-tale on a larger scale and with all the necessary paraphernalia of prolegomena and excursus. I shall then, of course, reproduce my originals with literal accuracy” 1890: xi), no trace of it remains in his *Nachlass* at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies in Philadelphia. This leaves the only monographs dedicated to the English folktale *tout court* as two works in German: Ludwig Lenz (1902) and Karlheinz Hellwig (1971). This is a truly remarkable fact when we stop to consider it; there remains much work for researchers of English fairy tales and other folktales to do.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

FAIRY TALES AS CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE NETHERLANDS AND FLANDERS



Vanessa Joosen

How! could one not offer a smart and observant child, whom one tells a foolish fairy tale, something that deserves a better name?

(Wolff 1977: 83)

In her influential educational manual *Proeve over de opvoeding* (Tract on Education, 1779), the Dutch author and critic Betje Wolff condemned parents who read fairy tales to their children in vehement terms. One century later, the Flemish Catholic Canon Amaat Joos came to the defense of fairy tales. The art of telling tales “is not to be disdained,” he warned, “because whoever masters it gains the friendship of adults and children alike” (1889: 5; all translations are by the author). His defense is persuasive: although folktales and fairy tales have been dismissed as nonsense concocted by simple people, they form the basis of children’s literature in many parts of the world (Stephens 2009: 91). Furthermore, while many of the best known fairy-tale collections were not primarily published for children, fairy tales have functioned as children’s entertainment for centuries. In the Dutch-speaking countries, however, it took rather a long time for arguments such as those made by Canon Joos to be accepted, and for fairy tales to gain the approval of established authors and educators. In this chapter, I trace this difficult entry of fairy tales and folktales into the canon of children’s literature in the Dutch-speaking countries, highlighting their presumed educational value and adaptation as crucial factors.

LEARNING FRENCH WITH PERRAULT, LEARNING MORALS WITH THE GRIMMS

The popularity of fairy tales with young Dutch readers is undisputed. Immediately after the publication of Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* (Stories, Or Tales of Times Passed, 1697), a Dutch pirate version by Adriaan Moetjens appeared that introduced the tales to children, as did so-called “centsprenten” or cheap, printed sheets that offered illustrated versions. The popularity of Perrault’s tales with children can be further deduced from the testimonies of, amongst others, Willem van Swaanenburg, who described how he treated a child to the tale of “the

little red sock,” a nickname of “Little Red Riding Hood” (1727: 23). In 1754, the first Dutch translation of Perrault was published. It placed a French and Dutch version side-by-side and was meant to teach French by means of tales that children liked to read anyway. The above-mentioned Betje Wolff and her colleague Aagje Deken (1781) described in verse how young children bought fairy tales from a haggler and were prepared to pay quite a bit of their pocket money for them:

Reading is innate to me
even at the age of five
I loved being told stories
of the fisher and his wife
and the fairy tale of the little red sock
and the swan’s knight [Lohengrin]
I bought them from the old sheeny [a derogatory term for a Jew]
I didn’t care for two cents or more.

(109–10)

Yet, as an educator Wolff was particularly critical of fairy tales. The enlightened Dutch pedagogues of the eighteenth century did everything they could to ban fairy tales from common lore (Buijnsters and Buijnsters-Smets 2001: 98). As Martin Sutton points out, with reference to, amongst others, Robert Darton, the tension between rationalism and fantasy is not so much tied to a historical period, but is indicative of a frame of mind that considers the fantastic to be useless and even harmful (1996: 10). The same holds true for the Dutch reception of fairy tales, where the same arguments are raised against fairy tales time and again: that they are immoral, scary and godless, that they fill children’s minds with nonsense and distract them from more valuable reading. Similar arguments were also raised against folk legends about Saint Nicholas, who became the patron saint of children (and who is the Dutch counterpart to Santa Claus). The 1798 *Almanak voor de beschaafde jeugd* (Almanac for Educated Youth) reads: “No child still believes in that fellow / Who does not live anywhere, whom nobody knows” (cited in Ghesquiere 1989: 101). This may have been wishful thinking on the part of the anonymous author, who valued education over fantasy. In the next century, not only did folktales about Saint Nicholas thrive, but the right climate developed for a growing interest in folktales and fairy tales.

Compared to its neighboring countries, however, the romantic spirit did not affect the Dutch-speaking regions as early and as intensely. There is no Dutch counterpart to authors and collectors such as Johann Karl August Musäus, Ludwig Tieck or Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Although Ruth Bottigheimer (1993: 89) warns against projecting the success of *Die Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children’s and Household Tales) onto its early reception, the Grimms’ tales were far better received in Germany, Britain and Denmark than in the Netherlands. The first Dutch translation did appear relatively quickly. *Sprookjes-boek voor kinderen* (1820, Fairy-tale Book for Children) offered a selection of faithfully translated tales in Dutch, accompanied by a preface that provided a romantic account of the Grimms’ principles. However, the book was slated in the only review that has survived, in the influential journal *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* (1821, National Literary Exercises):

With respect to the highly intellectual *German* publishers and book critics, and the most learned, but linguistically not very capable *Dutch* translator also, we have not for a long time held a more foolish little book with more repulsive illustrations in our hands. Some farm woman from *Nieder-Zwehrn* put the most numerous and most beautiful (!) fairy tales into [the Grimms'] heads! Maybe we do not understand the elevated purpose of these stunningly beautiful curiosities; but this we know, that we care too much for the brains and quiet sleep of our sweet little ones than that we should ever expose both to the fear-inducing impression of such ghostly illustrations and red-riding-hood, bluebeard-like tales.

(Anonymous 1821: 46)

The interest in the common folk that the Brothers Grimm promoted did not have the same appeal in the Netherlands. The review illustrates the resentment of the folk spirit when it describes the idealized Dorothea Viehmann condescendingly as “some farm woman from *Nieder-Zwehrn*,” and the reviewer is equally skeptical of the dark stories that appeal to more Romantic sensibilities. In this review, fantasy is equated with nonsense. In general, the Netherlands were quite reserved with regard to Romanticism and its literary poetics, which were considered too transgressive (Van den Berg and Couttenier 2009: 21). Moreover, in contrast to Edgar Taylor and David Jardine, who produced the first English translation of the Grimm tales, the anonymous Dutch translator endeavored to stay true to the Grimms’ text, selecting several folktales about common characters and translating them faithfully (Joosen 2012a) – an approach that met with the approval of neither Jacob Grimm nor the Dutch readership.

By the late-nineteenth century the tide turned, however. Grimms’ tales had at this point been translated more liberally by, amongst others, the popular children’s author J.J.A. Goeverneur, and influential authors had come to their defense. Nicolaas Beets, for example, had grasped the attraction of Dorothea Viehmann, whom he describes in *Over kinderboeken: Gesprek met Crito* (On Children’s Books: Conversation with Crito, 1867), as:

a woman ... apparently from the lower class, between fifty and sixty years old, far from beautiful, but with fixed, intelligent, not unpleasant facial features, and especially remarkable because of the big bright eyes, looking at me so strict and sharp ... she knew numerous tales, and possessed the gift of storytelling to the highest degree.

(Beets 1867: 48)

Beets’ fictional narrator Crito also stresses the didactic value of the Grimms’ fairy tales, in so doing challenging the conventional opposition between reason and fantasy. Children’s eagerness to hear the same tales time and again, he argues, helps to convey their moral lessons all the better (49).

The stories’ cruelty did remain an issue for many educators of the mid-nineteenth century in Holland and in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, which had gained independence in 1830 (Van Coillie 1997: 105). In this crucial period, however, the popularity of the stories of Hans Christian Andersen had helped improve the reputation of the fairy-tale genre. A year before the first Dutch translation of his tales appeared, *Des Keizers nieuwe klêeren* (1841, The Emperor’s New Clothes), the influential journal *De Gids* wrote prophetically: “We should not despair about that

lad, H.C. Andersen, who will one day occupy an honorable place among Denmark's greatest poets" (1840: 198). At that time, Andersen was only known for his work for adults. Yet his fairy tales would come to leave an impression on various Dutch authors, in part because their characteristic melancholy and Andersen's use of wit were in accord with the spirit of the age. In 1842, E.J. Potgieter wrote a poem based on "The Snow Queen," but without the enchanted boy's release. His poem ends with death and sadness. C.E. van Koetsveld's *Sprookjes in den trant van Andersen* (1858, Fairy Tales in the Style of Andersen) combines adaptations of Andersen with the author's original tales. In the preface to this collection Van Koetsveld sheds light on Andersen's position in the Netherlands:

Our Dutch practicality is sometimes annoyed by the wizards and fairies of the high North, or the jingles of the tales; but time and time again they invite us, those fairy tales, both to dream and to think. They embody a child's faith, a man's experience, a Christian's hope.

(1858: v)

While earlier fairy-tale collections by Straparola, Basile and Perrault had been far removed from protestant ideals, Andersen's literary fairy tales and the Grimms' Christian-infused folktales approached the acceptable. In Catholic Flanders, however, the attitude of the Church was ambivalent. In 1883, L.N. Crouse still condemned them as "senseless little fantasies ... that violate the divine and heavenly powers in one way or another," but other Catholics did find that some fairy tales were compatible with Catholicism, as long as they were morally sound and chaste (Van Coillie 1997: 105–9). On these grounds, many local folktales were rejected.

Under the influence of the Brothers Grimm, the interest in local folktales had gained ground. In the 1840s, the German folklorist Johann Wilhelm Wolf published *Wodana*, a journal devoted to Flemish folktales, as well as various volumes of folktales from Germany, Flanders and the Netherlands (Top 1975–2010). Collecting folktales was especially popular in marginalized regions, such as Flanders or Friesland, where nationalist sentiments sometimes offered an impetus (Meder 2000: 43). In Flanders, collections of folktales by Adolf Lootens, Pol De Mont and Alfons De Cock, and Marie-Elizabeth Belpaire and Hilda Ram appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century. Well known and respected authors, most notably Guido Gezelle, also took an interest in local folktales. As Jan Van Coillie (1997: 107) shows, De Mont, De Cock, Belpaire and Ram adapted folktales for children by using diminutives and addressing young readers directly. In their series *Wonderland* (1894–1908), Belpaire and Ram combined Flemish folktales with hagiography – a combination that worked well for their predominantly Catholic audience. According to August Gittée (1894), Flemish folktales were characterized by their carnivalesque spirit, interest in eroticism and an anti-authoritarian attitude towards, amongst others, the clergy. These features were hard to reconcile with the Catholic dominance in Flemish schools. Nevertheless, Julius Sabbe and Alfons Vermast stressed in *Grootmoeders vertelboek* (1883, Grandmother's book of stories) that schools and families played an important part in preserving local heritage. They feared that fairy tales and storytelling were being ousted by rational knowledge, and that this would lead to a uniform type of education – a fear that still resonates today.

In the Netherlands, pioneering folklorists of the nineteenth century were Nicolaus Westendorp, Henri Welters, G.D.J. Schotel and Gerrit Jan Boekennoogen. The latter launched a call for the collection of Dutch folktales which brought him into contact with a doctor, Cornelis Bakker, who gathered tales from his patients (Meder 2000: 43). Various folklorists were also active in the Friesland, the northwest part of the Netherlands which has its own local language (Dekker et al. 1997: 26). Tiede Roelofs Dijkstra, for one, used them “to prove that the Frisian ancestors were not the dumb, uncivilized savages they were often assumed to be.” Jurjen van der Kooi (1993: 161) notes that few of the collected folktales are originally Dutch. “Compared to our neighboring countries in the East and South, Holland is not really a fairy-tale country,” argue Dekker, van der Kooi and Meder. They do, however, distinguish some typically Dutch features of traditional tales, such as a preference for animal tales, novellae, and humorous tales rather than tales of magic (1997: 31). In Flanders, by contrast, fairy tales of magic, often with a humorous or didactic twist, were the most popular (De Meyer 1995: 9). The love of pancakes surfaces regularly too, and the Walloons (French-speaking inhabitants of the South of Belgium) are often mocked. Charles V (Keizer Karel) and Saint Peter are recurrent figures in many Flemish folktales (Lox 1999: 294–7). Important to note, however, is that few folktales became part of children’s literature. They were mostly collected in scientific journals and volumes published for adult readers (Meder 2000: 44). One exception is the aforementioned body of legends about Saint Nicholas, which are often merged with fairy-tale traits (Ghesquiere 1989: 33, 40).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FAIRY-TALE CANON

The inclusion of internationally renowned fairy tales in children’s literature continued to provoke debate after the nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century various pedagogues debated the nature of good children’s books. “Fables and fairy tales are at odds with common sense,” the influential critic Nellie van Kol wrote in 1899 (311). Small children in particular would be harmed, she argued, since they were the target audience of many fairy-tale picture books that were emerging in this period. Older children were allowed to read fairy tales, not as entertainment, but as an educational means “to illustrate the coarseness of the age that produced such fairy tales” (312). Van Kol’s critique also anticipated some arguments that feminist and neo-Marxist critics raised against fairy tales in the 1970s:

The weak-willed fairy-tale princess, awarded as a trophy to some Hans born with the helmet, infinitely harms the respect which even the child is supposed to harbor for women. The least someone can do who tells a tale about a princess who is offered as a prize, is to point out to the child that such things may happen in fairy tales, but that in real life, spouses choose each other out of love.

(Van Kol 1899: 323–4)

Van Kol argues that the child should be pulled out of the fantasy world and made aware of the differences between fantasy and reality. By contrast, Mathilde Wibaut-Berdenis van Berlekom argued, in the same period, that people of all ages should indulge in the fantasy that fairy tales offer:

Fairy tales bring to a child the joy that an artwork brings to an adult. They are a true treasure for the child's imagination. And one should not call it childish to love fairy tales. The artists who have enriched the world with beauty were like children, living in the land of dreams.

(1906: 8)

Wibaut-Berdenis van Berlekom proceeds to deplore the fact that few working-class children were familiar with fairy tales and points to the incompatibility of fairy tales and factory life: "Factory workers do not make up sagas, the steam whistle does not evoke beautiful images; with all the will of the world one cannot see elves or dream figures in the black smoke of the chimneys" (18). This plea resonates with the influence of the so-called *Kunsterziehungsbewegung* (Art Education Movement) which originated in Germany and promoted the education of underprivileged children through art. One of its Dutch representatives, J.W. Gerhard, attributed an important role to fairy tales in this type of education, especially if they were illustrated by renowned artists such as Walter Crane. Since children liked reading the tales so much anyway, he argued, having them illustrated by good artists would contribute to the aesthetic education of the young (1905: 204). Various influential artists of the early twentieth century were indeed inspired by fairy tales, amongst others Berhardina Midderigh-Bokhorst and Rie Cramer in the Netherlands and Edmond van Offel and Emiel Walravens in Flanders. The range of books at the time was quite diverse, extending from luxury editions of fairy tales to cheaper collected volumes and picture books and factory books produced on a large scale. Liberal adaptations, in particular, such as those by Christine Doorman (after 1900) and Willy Schermelé (after the 1930s) were reprinted countless times.

In the 1920s, Antti Aarne's international index boosted interest in folktales in the Dutch-speaking countries. Various volumes with fairy tales from all over the world appeared, among others those by popular children's author Nienke Van Hichtum and the influential Flemish critic Hendrik Van Tichelen. In the Netherlands, the first folklore institute was established in 1934. The 1930s also witnessed debates about the ethics of reproducing folktales and fairy tales. Various collectors and translators took a very liberal approach to their source material and sources were often obliterated. The Flemish author Stijn Streuvels is one of the few authors who was challenged for doing so. A few tales from his *Prutske's Vertelselboek* (1935, Prutske's book of tales) were so similar to Lootens' *Brugsche kindervertelsels* (Children's Tales from Bruges) that a controversy surrounding copyright and ownership emerged in Flemish newspapers (Ghesquiere 2005: 161). Yet, as Donald Haase argues (1999), ownership is always problematic when it comes to reproducing fairy tales: because they are fictions that are generally seen as being common property many adapters just use the material as they see fit. This also applies to Dutch adaptations of Grimm and Perrault. The name "Perrault," for one, is virtually absent from early Dutch fairy-tale books, even though his version of "Cinderella" was one of the most popular and reprinted tales.

The Second World War had a relatively small impact on the popularity and availability of fairy tales (Hofman 2000). Many considered the tales a welcome distraction for children and adults alike, and they were printed as long as paper was available. In Nazi Germany, the fairy tales by Grimm and Andersen were considered important

elements of cultural heritage, and they were used in Flanders and the Netherlands accordingly to promote the idea of an extended Germanic empire (Joosen 2012b). In 1940, the entire Grimm collection appeared in a translation by Maria de Vries-Vogel, illustrated by Anton Pieck, with an ideological, pro-German preface by the translator's husband, Jan de Vries, who was later arrested for collaboration. In the postwar editions of this translation, the preface was omitted and the tale "The Jew in Thorns" was temporarily replaced with "The Moor in Thorns" to avoid anti-Semitic connotations. In contrast to Germany, however, where the Grimm tales were considered somewhat suspect after the war, the tales were not so tied up with Nazism and their popularity did not suffer so much as a result. Disney films helped to keep the interest in the tales alive in the postwar period, and Pieck's illustrations served as the basis for the Dutch fairy-tale theme park De Efteling, which opened in 1952 and is still a major draw today.

REVISING THE CANON

While Disney and the Efteling helped to maintain the position of fairy-tale classics as part of children's literature, the Dutch fairy-tale tradition received new impulses in the postwar period in the form of parodies and new literary tales. The Flemish author Louis Paul Boon wrote eroticized adaptations of fairy tales for adults in the 1950s and the 1960s, in which he also parodied Freudian interpretations of the tales. New literary tales were also written by, amongst others, Godfried Bomans (*Sprookjes* [Fairy Tales], 1946). Bomans' fairy tales display a Romantic appreciation for simple adults who have retained a childlike view on life. In "De Bramenplukker" (The Blackberry Picker), for example, the protagonist takes dew drops for pearls, and sees the sky as mosaics. "Can't you see?" he asks other people, but they cannot, feel cheated and hang him (27–8). The Netherlands' most famous children's author, Annie M.G. Schmidt, wrote fairy tales in a style often compared to Andersen: solemn, but infused with irony. "De Diepvriesdames" (The Ladies of the Freezer) is Schmidt's comical counterpart to "The Snow Queen": a hairdresser falls asleep in a cooling room and dreams of a crystal city where he is held prisoner. After his escape, he hates "everything that comes out of the freezer, even broad beans" (75).

As in other Western countries, the resistance to the fairy-tale canon grew in the 1970s. Traditional tales were deemed dated, sexist and needlessly cruel, and progressive children's literature was promoted instead. *Waarom lusten kinderen nog reuzen?* (Why do Children Still Like Giants?) Eric Hulsens asked in 1980, punning on the double meaning of "lusten" (to like/to eat). He was particularly critical of the neo-romantic, psychoanalytic and esoteric interest in fairy tales that the 1970s had awitnessed with translations of works by Bruno Bettelheim and Verena Kast, in which fairy tales were considered a source of wisdom. Hulsens' own view was more down to earth:

Snow White is a drab who never takes her life into her own hands and is only saved by her female charm. Generation after generation, girls learn from this fairy tale that they only have to be pretty and wait for a prince.

(1980a: 57–8)

Like Nellie van Kol at the turn of the century, however, Hulsens does consider the tales an important source of historical perspectives.

Fairy-tale rewritings of the contemporary period have been inspired by these debates, and in turn contributed to them, as I have argued in *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales* (2011). For example, Paul Biegel's *Wie je droomt ben je zelf* (1977, *You Are What You Dream*) draws on Bettelheim's comparison of the therapeutic value of fairy tales to dreams. Biegel's story is partly set in the dreams of Red Riding Hood, her grandmother and the wolf. Internationally popular authors like Roald Dahl and Janosch were influential too and inspired various humorous rewritings in Dutch. In *Roodkapje en de zeven geitjes* (1994, *Red Riding Hood and the Seven Kids*) Ivo de Wijs rewrites famous tales in three columns each, which range from traditional to absurd. The frog prince, for example, takes the place of the grandmother in "Red Riding Hood" and is asked why he has such bulging eyes and such a broad mouth (23).

As the conventions of children's literature shifted towards more aesthetic texts in the 1990s, fairy-tale rewritings gained more literary and psychological complexity. Wim Hofman was inspired by genetic research on the Grimms' early drafts and editions to create his "Snow White" rewriting *Zwart als inkt* (1997, *Black as Ink*). As in the Grimm versions prior to 1819, Snow White's mother is her enemy, and her father is at war. In addition, Hofman's rewriting contains feminist layers. Snow White is not a dumb girl who is easily misled, but self-conscious and alert. She knows that her mother offers her a poisoned apple, but accepts because she has been deprived of agency anyway. To give another example, Anne Provoost used a young girl's sexual needs as the basis for her rewriting of "Beauty and the Beast" for Young Adults. *De Roos en het Zwijn* (1997, *The Rose and the Pig*) is set in the Middle Ages. Rosalena's desire alienates her from her family and has her haunted by guilt. The story offers an exploration of the notions of beauty and ugliness, magic and realism. Rosalena ultimately bears a two-headed child that symbolizes her being forever torn between the Beast and her father, between desire and guilt. This lack of resolution also characterizes some rewritings for younger children. *Roodlapje* by Pieter Gaudesaboos (*Little Red Rag*, 2003), for example, can be read as a modernized fairy tale with no happy ending. The protagonist, Lapje, tries to escape her dreary, gray environment and indifferent parents by retreating into a fantasy world. Without a clear antagonist, a solution seems impossible. The collage structure of the book resembles a forest, through which the reader has to find a path, yet can never arrive at a clear destination. The Dutch pragmatism that Van Kol already noted can still be observed in these rewritings, but is not used to condemn the tales, but to play with them. Ted van Lieshout, for example, has Red Riding Hood's grandmother question her granddaughter's curiosity:

What the heck? I don't have big ears at all. Only the lobes are a little stretched because I have been wearing earrings all my life ... Why are you so critical all of a sudden? ... You don't hear me complaining about those bent little legs of yours.
(2011: 75)

The acknowledgment of these rewritings' literary quality with nominations for prestigious children's literature awards, shows that juries see them as an original and important contribution to contemporary children's literature.

By comparison, folktales and their rewritings still remain marginal, despite efforts by authors such as Marita De Sterck, Henri Van Daele and Gerda Dendooven. Arguably the best-known folktales are those about the spider Anansi which have traveled to the Netherlands from Ghana via the Dutch former colonies of Surinam and the Antilles (Van Duin 2009: 104). Similar to the tales by Grimm and Perrault in previous centuries, the cruelty of these stories is somewhat subdued so that Anansi appears mainly as a clown and mild trickster. Folktales that are not adapted or that do not have an easily recognizable protagonist (as, for instance, Anansi or Saint Nicholas) are seldom read or heard by a young audience.

CONCLUSION

The entry of fairy tales into the canon of children's literature in Flanders and the Netherlands did not occur as early as in its neighboring countries, which is partly due to the strong hold that enlightened and Christian values held in child rearing, and to the absence of any renowned fairy-tale collectors. As in many countries, adaptation to the norms of children's literature was crucial in getting the tales accepted. The many liberal translations of Perrault, Grimm and Andersen can be deplored for subduing the potentially controversial content of the tales on the one hand; yet, on the other, these freely adapted versions were crucial in gaining approval for fairy tales and establishing them as an accepted genre for young listeners and readers. A handful of traditional fairy tales has gained its place in the Dutch children's literature canon since the late nineteenth century and now forms a connection between generations – a connection that is fostered by, among other things, the popular theme park De Efteling. This canon of tales converges with the internationally most popular ones, and contains no Dutch or Flemish stories. The appeal of local folktales has always been much more limited: first because of their transgressive content, now because of their lack of globalized mediations. Nevertheless, throughout the last two centuries, efforts have repeatedly been made to familiarize children with these stories: first, by folklorists with an interest in education or vice versa, by teachers with an interest in folktales, and nowadays by children's authors who value this local heritage as an important addition to the more popular fairy-tale canon. In recent decades, parodic and literary rewritings have become ever more popular, and serve to endorse this canon of fairy tales, even when authors set out to subvert the classic plots and styles. After all, by parodying or revising fairy tales, these rewritings rely on the audience's knowledge of the traditional stories, the fame and relevance of which they in turn help to confirm. While Flemish and Dutch folktales need to be rescued from oblivion recurrently, fairy tales as such have become an integral part of children's literature and are unlikely to lose this status any time soon.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

ECO-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Nature and the supernatural in the Cinderella cycle



Nicole A. Thesz

In Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms' fairy tales, and in many other traditions, nature is more than simply a backdrop, which is to be expected given the pre-industrial context in which these stories originated. In the Cinderella cycle, nature plays a particularly active role, especially in the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Nursery and Household Tales, 1812–1857). The natural elements that guide the Grimms' heroine are remarkably multi-layered when read in comparison to other versions. In this story, both plant life and birds come to the assistance of the heroine, and, aside from the doves' faculty of speech, these natural entities are not overtly anthropomorphized. Other stories in the Cinderella cycle, by contrast, whilst they associate nature with Cinderella's plight and salvation, often deemphasize this association between help and the environment or focus on quasi-human helpers.

THE ORIGINS OF HELP: THE GRIMMS' TALE IN 1812 AND 1857

This chapter examines the portrayal of nature in the Grimms' successive versions of "Cinderella" with focus on the practical and symbolic significance of the story's environmental aspects. Methodologically, I draw on the larger fairy-tale tradition to examine the role of nature in the tale type ATU 510A (Persecuted Heroine), the "Cinderella" tale, and in somewhat less detail in ATU 510B (Unnatural Love), which appears in the Grimms' "Allerleirauh" ("Allfur"). From an ecocritical standpoint, it is necessary to take into account the shifting concepts of nature involved in the collection, editing, telling, and analyzing of fairy tales. More specifically, the following inquiry takes as its starting point the close connection between natural motifs and the emotional focus of tale types 510A and B – the heroines' victimization – since the magical elements in these related tale types are often connected to the natural realm.

In versions of the Cinderella story from Western Europe, assistance regularly derives from natural sources. It will be important to determine, in the analysis of the broader cycle, whether this pattern also occurs in other regions. A brief survey of international variants seems to support this, as seen in the oldest documented version, the Chinese

“Yeh-hsien” or “Yexian,” in which a fish helps the young maiden. In a Tibetan variant, help involves a cow, birds, and a horse (Schlepp 2002). In Giambattista Basile’s tale (discussed below) and an Italian variant from Tuscany, “La Cenerentola,” we see a bird helper. Francisco Vaz da Silva has noted the preponderance of versions in Southern Europe in which the mother is transformed into a cow that helps the young girl. In this story, it is the cow’s bones that possess magical helping qualities (Vaz da Silva 2014: 26–7). An African version (published in 1911) imagines a frog as the heroine’s helper, but William Bascom reasons that this tale may derive from European contact (1988: 152–3, 158). On the other hand, in a Zuni version, the heroine is helped by turkeys, who dress her for a dance, but she reneges on her promise to keep a curfew and they abandon her. The story does not end in marriage, but with a moral of permanent estrangement between turkeys and humankind (Pollock 1996: n.p.; Stewart 2000: 7–9).

One might ask whether the active natural powers that help Cinderella characters correlate with a particular resourcefulness (or lack thereof) or piety on the part of the female protagonist. For example, in the Chinese version, we see evidence of “reciprocal kindness” between the girl and the fish (Beauchamp 2010: 475). Given the specific focus on the Grimms’ tale in the present analysis, it is of additional interest to examine whether the religious undertones in their tales – and the nexus of spiritual and natural elements – are evident in tales of other traditions. The cow as helper in the Southern European versions (e.g. from Portugal; Pedroso 1882), as well as in the Himalayan tale “The Story of the Black Cow,” does suggest a persistent correspondence between nature, divinity, and rescue in tales from diverse regions (Tatar 1999: 125–6).

It is relevant that the Grimms as philologists favored *Naturpoesie* (natural poetry, such as folk tales) over *Kunstpoesie* (artificial poetry). Although *Naturpoesie* does not in and of itself refer to the natural realm, the brothers did use plant metaphors in their critical writings to describe the grounded, holistic qualities of this mode of writing (Murayama 2005: 116–21). In comparisons with narratives from the global tradition, the Grimm tales invest nature with particularly fanciful, innocent, and often divine connotations. Seen in comparison with other traditions, they also appear to emphasize the world of plants to a greater degree. For example, the heroine in KHM 3, “Marienkind” (“Virgin Mary’s Child”), lives in isolation in the woods for years as penance for lying to the Virgin, a punishment that softens her stubbornness. The “Maiden Without Hands” (KHM 31) receives help from an angel in the woods. Rapunzel in KHM 12 witnesses the miracle of her husband’s sight being restored in their natural refuge. Hansel and Gretel (KHM 15) are lost in the woods, where they encounter not only wild animals but also birds that offer guidance and assistance (Bettelheim 1976: 162–3) (while Bettelheim emphasizes that a white bird leads the children to the gingerbread house, he fails to note that this bird is not yet present in the 1812 version of the Grimm tale).

Significantly, nature is visibly domesticated in the course of the Grimms’ editing process of KHM 21, “Aschenputtel” (“Cinderella”), which took place between 1810 (in early notes on the tale, which are lost) and 1857. The Grimms’ revisions from 1812 (first volume of the first edition of KHM) onward emphasizes not only the central role of the environment, but more importantly a changing perspective toward the workings of the natural (and closely connected supernatural) realm. Certain editing choices may have been made only for the purpose of narrative effect, but other changes offer distinct clues as to the Grimms’ ideological preferences, in particular

those of Wilhelm Grimm, who was most involved in the editing of the tales. As indicated by the tale's introduction, the heroine's plight arises from her mother's premature death, which leads to neglect and abuse by her stepmother and stepsisters. The supernatural help that compensates for this traumatic loss appears to originate from the biological mother's spirit. However, the connection between the deceased parent and the helpers – the tree and birds – becomes much subtler in the course of the Grimms' editing. This change suggests a possible reluctance to engage in what might be considered nature mysticism.

In the 1812 edition of "Aschenputtel," the dying mother reminds her daughter to be pious, counsels her to plant a tree on her grave, and explicitly promises help:

Liebes Kind, ich muss dich verlassen, aber wenn ich oben im Himmel bin, will ich auf dich herab sehen, pflanz ein Bäumlein auf mein Grab, und wenn du etwas wünschst, schüttele daran, so sollst du es haben, und wenn du sonst in Not bist, so will ich dir Hilfe schicken, nur bleib fromm und gut.

(Derungs 1999: 79–80)

Dear child, I must leave you now, but I will look down on you from heaven. Plant a little tree on my grave, and when you want something, just shake the tree, and you shall get what you want. I will help you in time of need. Just remain pious and good.

(Ashliman 1998: website)

In this early version of the story there is ample evidence of pagan ideas about the relationship between spirits and trees. Cinderella's mother believes that she herself will be able to help her daughter, albeit through the vehicle of nature, as in the case of the cows in the above-mentioned Southern European or Asian versions. Since there is no pre-1812 version of "Aschenputtel" available (it was not among the early forms of the tales preserved in the so-called Ölenberg manuscript sent to Clemens Brentano in 1810), it is impossible to verify whether the Grimms added the introductory reference to piety. The Grimms' practice of adding religious references to their stories is well documented in scholarship on their work (Rölleke 1984: 212), so it remains possible that this reference to religion is the result of an editorial intervention. However, given the widespread connection between the mother's death and a natural helper in other tales within the international Cinderella cycle, it is likely that the Grimms' oral sources already included a link between mother, grave, nature, and supernatural assistance.

In the final edition of "Aschenputtel," the heroine of the story still receives dresses for the ball from birds associated with the hazel tree which Cinderella planted from the twig that she requested from her father. The presence of the magical tree is thus retained throughout the editing of the tale. Yet by 1857, it is no longer the mother who suggests planting a tree; the mother merely observes: "Liebes Kind, bleibe fromm und gut, so wird dir der liebe Gott immer beistehen, und ich will vom Himmel auf dich herabblicken und will um dich sein" (Grimm 1997: 137). ("Dear child, be good and pious. Then the dear Lord shall always assist you, and I shall look down from heaven and take care of you," Zipes 2003: 79).

In this revised passage, all references to the natural world and natural powers are removed from the story's introduction. Moreover, as compared to the 1812 version, the length and specificity of the mother's dying words (and thus her power) are significantly diminished. Instead of being instructed by her mother to plant a tree, it is Cinderella herself who initiates the magical sequence of events when she asks her father for a twig. This more resourceful version of the heroine – akin to Basile's protagonist discussed below – seems to indicate a Cinderella figure who may be victimized, but is attuned to the powers of nature. The implication of transmitted matrilinear power is, however, considerably weakened. Given the numerous versions in which the mother seems to reappear in a cow that helps the girl, this matrilinear support can be considered fundamental to the tale type. The Tibetan version discussed by Wayne Schlepp even indicates that an act of matricide committed by the Cinderella figure precedes the mother's selfless help from the afterlife, suggesting that the Cinderella tale might be as much about redemption as about overcoming victimization (2002: 133–4).

For the Grimms, nature's help is grounded not only in innocence and hard work, but also in appreciation, or even reverence, for the natural realm. Significantly, their heroine in 1857 chooses as a gift from her father a natural object (the first twig that brushes against his hat on his way home) as opposed to the material riches desired by her stepsisters. This indicates Aschenputtel's humility and wisdom, but the father's experience also gives a subtle hint that nature is on her side. In fact, nature reminds him of his neglected daughter's request when a twig knocks off his hat as he makes his way home (Grimm 1997: 138). This situation creates a contrast between the stepdaughters' materialistic requests, which the father has no trouble remembering, and nature's influence, which conveys Aschenputtel's deeper values. Additionally, Aschenputtel seems to either have power over nature (in the form of the twig), or have predictive powers. Altogether, this scene is reminiscent of Basile's heroine's curse that prevents the father from returning without his daughter's gifts; here, too, it is only this reminder that prompts the father to honor his biological daughter's wishes (Grimm 1997: 138). However, such hints at nature's influence can potentially be overlooked in the context of the Christian framework in the Grimms' tale.

In the Grimms' 1857 version, the mother's last wish – that her daughter remain pious – emphasizes religiosity, but omits the problematic promise (from a Christian perspective) to remain active in the afterlife and to intervene for her daughter through the mediation of a tree. In contrast, the 1812 version relates to the folk versions cited by Vaz da Silva in which the bones of the deceased seem to “contain the soul essence of lineages” (29). The transformation of this element ensures that the mother's power is diminished in the final Grimm version, in which it is not she who sends help, but rather God (this distinction is muddled in the English translation). Indeed, the mother's last words in 1857, rendered in direct speech – the mother's only tangible presence within the text – is much more limited, being reduced in length by half. This diminishing of the female voice, as Ruth B. Bottigheimer notes with respect to the Grimms' “Aschenputtel,” has broader significance in terms of the story's treatment of gender and communication. According to Bottigheimer, the diminishment of direct speech by women and the corresponding enhancement of direct speech given to male characters in the course of the Grimms' editing of this tale reflects their ideological preference for active male figures and passive women (1987: 59).

BASILE AND THE GRIMMS: TREES OF LIFE OR TREES OF MAGIC?

The introductory sequence of Grimm's "Aschenputtel," in which the helper entity is closely linked to, if not originating in, nature (adding nuance to the term "supernatural"), contains parallels with Basile's "La gatta Cenerentola" ("The Cat Cinderella") of 1634. Both versions identify trees as a source of help, which distinguishes them from other popular Cinderella tales. The comforting presence of the tree suggests a continuation of life and spirit, as well as of material stability in the face of family upheaval. Though most prominent in the stories by Grimm and Basile, trees are also present in the early Chinese version, albeit they are shown in a different context. Here, the heroine is prevented from attending a festival because her stepmother demands that she watch over the fruit grove – a less gratuitous task than the sorting of ash and lentils (Grimm), and one, moreover, that connects Yeh-hsien (Yexian) with the female realm of fertility (see Tatar 1999: 107–8 and Jameson 1988: 76). The fact that Yeh-hsien is asleep, clutching a tree, when her stepfamily returns from the festival is no mere comic diversion, but rather evidence of the protection and comfort offered by this tree, which presents a direct parallel to the Basile and Grimm versions. In all three cases, it may be significant that the trees are cultivated with a direct purpose and thus stem from a domesticated vision of nature. This domestication is also seen in the Chinese motif of the fish as helper, since the fish in the story is previously raised by the heroine; Beauchamp in fact links this motif to the history of aquaculture in Southern China (462).

Several other canonical versions envision helpers that are more anthropomorphic. For example, in Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon" ("Cinderella," 1697) and "Peau d'Âne" ("Donkey-Skin") the helper is a fairy godmother. Notably, the Chinese version "Yeh-Hsien" features not just a fish (whose bones grant wishes), but also a spirit with human appearance who descends from the sky (Tatar 1999: 107). Basile's tale similarly imagines a composite helper; after Zezolla's period of neglect and abuse, she receives a message from a dove telling her that help awaits her among the fairies of Sardinia. This message appears to awaken the girl's prior mystical knowledge, or, alternately, reawakens magical abilities inherited from her mother if we extrapolate from the Grimms' tale. The mysteriousness surrounding the origins of this connection with the fairies is never resolved, but the situation clearly marks Basile's Cinderella as a powerful and worthy heroine despite the fact that she has murdered her first stepmother (a parallel to the above-mentioned Tibetan version). Unlike Grimm, neither piety nor goodness are required in "The Cat Cinderella."

Moreover, Basile's version does without the motif of pain and suffering seen in the Grimm tale, in which the girl waters the hazel tree with her own tears while praying. Altogether, "La gatta Cenerentola" conveys a general impression of resourcefulness: the girl herself contacts the fairies, she forces her neglectful father, by means of a curse, to return with gifts from Sardinia, and she competently (though without tears or suffering) nurtures the date tree sent to her by the fairies. Basile's heroine, furthermore, has the assistance of a powerful anthropomorphic entity in the form of the fairy that alights from the date tree. The assistance rendered by this fairy strengthens the impression that Zezolla has more agency than the Grimm heroine because the fairy provides her with the support of a semi-human interlocutor. Simultaneously,

however, the presence of the fairy also diminishes the role played by nature in the Grimm tale, in which tree and birds concomitantly offer help and evoke isolation.

While Basile's maiden is less forsaken than the Grimms' Cinderella, she is nevertheless forced to be more independent than Perrault's heroine. The latter does not interact primarily with natural elements, but rather with a quasi-human helper. The girl largely stands by as the godmother performs magic and assuages her distress. Author Jane Yolen objects to the helplessness of Perrault's heroine, although she concedes that this heroine does do more to take her fate in her own hands than those protagonists who appear in the mass-market versions of the story (1988: 300). We therefore witness wide variation in representations of nature and resourcefulness in the Cinderella tale type. The environment as helping entity is fundamental to the Grimm tale and significant in Basile's version. Yet it is barely present in Perrault's story, in which the magical helper is a quasi-human interlocutor who requires little to no action on the heroine's part.

Much as the presence of help from external sources might be seen as proof of a diminishment of female empowerment, the role of nature – as Cinderella's potential helper – itself can be distorted for ideological purposes. Bottigheimer has noted the ways in which the iconography of forests and trees is used in Grimms' tales to isolate female characters (e.g. KHM 3 and KHM 11; Bottigheimer 1987: 102–4) by, for example, showing them imprisoned in trees (or towers) for years at a time. Conversely, male characters who venture into the woods or climb onto trees are able to depart after mere days and can find their own way (Bottigheimer 1987: 105). In certain tales, therefore, nature is used to present a form of isolation rather than power, which, as Bottigheimer suggests, may be rooted in patriarchal attempts to turn female power over nature into displays of forsakenness. Interestingly enough, Wilhelm Grimm instructed his brother, the illustrator Ludwig Emil, to depict scenarios that emphasized the heroines' social and physical isolation (Figure 35.1) (Bottigheimer 1987: 105, 110–11).

However, the Cinderella cycle proves to be an exception to Bottigheimer's claim since Cinderella in fact derives her power and capacity for survival from nature. This power is, at least in the Grimm and Basile versions, of matrilinear origin. As opposed to using nature to weaken a woman's power, these tales propose a link between nature and femininity. At the same time, the Grimms do dilute the importance of this matrilinear connection in the course of their editing and, moreover, portray nature (the birds) as part of a marginalized space in which Cinderella endures abuse and hard work. Once she has returned to the fold of society through her marriage, Cinderella will no longer seek out nature – although her memories, as the tale suggests, may help her to pass on a similar strength to her daughter.

CINDERELLA VARIATIONS: ALL-FUR AND HER SISTERS

The cycle of stories in which a girl escapes the incestuous advances of her father (ATU 510B) parallels the "Cinderella" tales (510A) in several respects: they have in common the motifs of the abusive parent, servitude, a public event at which the girl meets the groom, and the test of recognition after temporary separation. Variations upon this pattern are found in Giovan Francesco Straparola's "Tebaldo" (1553), Basile's "L'orsa" ("The Bear," 1634), Perrault's "Donkey-Skin," and in Grimm's "All-Fur" (1812). Another commonality between 510A and 510B, which is frequently



Figure 35.1 Ludwig Emil Grimm, illustration to “Aschenputtel” (“Cinderella,” 1825).
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overlooked, is the prominent role played by nature in the rescue of the heroine. However, the “Cinderella” figures receive help from a living, active environment, whereas the “Allfur” maidens rely on dead nature as a form of concealment.

Marian Cox’s extensive survey of “Cinderella” variants indicates that stories in the type 510A category outnumber those in 510B by roughly 2:1 (Cox 1893: 1–79). Yet, as Maria Tatar points out, the Grimms largely suppressed the motif of the incestuous father (except in “All-Fur”), preferring instead to foreground the rivalry between (step)mother and daughter in the “Oedipal subplot” (Tatar 2003: 154). Both branches of the ATU 510 tales are in fact grounded in a family crisis that necessitates

the daughters' departure from home. In this scenario, the Cinderella characters often rely on nature to gain dress and transportation for the ball, but their desperate counterparts in type 510B depend on the natural realm to escape their fathers. In both cases, this realm provides a disguise or new identity (dress for the ball or disguise to aid escape) to help the heroines improve their fates.

A significant difference between the "Cinderella" subtypes can be seen in the fact that the heroines of "Donkey-Skin" and "All-Fur" sacrifice nature – the animals that provide the pelts – in order to meet their needs, which is indicative of nature's subservient role under human control (in some type 510A tales, the helpers, cows or fish, are similarly sacrificed, but not by the heroines themselves). All-Fur's matter-of-fact demand for a piece of skin from every animal in her father's kingdom indicates tacit acceptance of the availability of nature for the use and enjoyment of humankind. Conversely, one might also argue that these heroines mimic nature's non-human inhabitants. For a while, at least, the girls' debasement – seen in the furs that grant the maidens of 510B respite from their role as attractive marital objects as well as in the dirt and ashes that result from Cinderella's toil – seems to erase some of the artificial lines drawn between the human and non-human realms. This is accentuated in the case of Basile's heroine, who is transformed into a bear to escape her father, but whose control over this alternate identity clearly shows the human identity to be dominant; she can undergo and undo this transformation by using a stick that she holds between her teeth. While the Cinderella tale features quasi-divine helpers who actively protect the heroine, the mimicking of the animal form in the All-Fur tales even more clearly suggests the instrumentalization of the natural realm. Yet the latter stories also comment more honestly on the existential vulnerability of humans in both nature and society and touch upon the proximity of life and death for human and animal alike. All-Fur may depend on the death of animals for her protection, and yet her hiding place in a tree stump speaks to the natural presence of decay in the sylvan world, much as Cinderella's success is unable to erase the tragedy of her mother's mortality.

COMMUNICATION WITH NATURE: PREPARATIONS FOR THE BALL

Cinderella's efforts to attend the ball garner significant emotional attention in the Grimms' tale, only outdone by the suspense that precedes her final recognition as the true bride. Both emotional crises involve some of the most striking rewritings by the brothers in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. In the 1857 version, Cinderella attempts to fulfill her stepmother's harsh tests of separating lentils and ashes – with the help of the birds – in order to be permitted to attend the ball. Although the tale acknowledges the unfairness of this task (especially in view of the fact that the stepmother reneges on her promise), it may be significant that Cinderella accepts this ordeal. This is a sign of humility, resilience, and work ethic that appears fundamental to female worth in the Grimms' tales and elsewhere. The 1812 version does not, however, present work in the same goal-oriented fashion. In that version, the task of sorting lentils (assigned by the eldest stepsister) must be completed while the others attend the ball and without any promise of reward; nature helps Cinderella because of her victimization, but without any intimation that the natural realm might be swayed by the supposed moral advantage of the willingness to perform hard work.

In the context of Cinderella's efforts to attend the ball and her later flight from this event (in 1812, due to an imposed curfew, in 1857, by choice), the role of nature, and the Grimms' editing of this role, merit attention. Whereas in 1812, Cinderella observes the ball on the first night from the dovecote (a strategy suggested by the doves), it becomes, in 1857, her hiding-place upon having evaded the prince after the dance. Notably, her father, in attempting to help the prince search for her, chops it down with an ax, a violent act he repeats on the second night by cutting down the pear tree she hides in. Although Cinderella escapes unscathed, this encounter demonstrates the father's ruthlessness. Moreover, his violence (not discouraged by the prince) appears directed at nature and female alike – a confluence emphasized by the narrative's indication that the tree is full of fruit. The Grimms' editing involves a subjugation of nature and women, harsh evocation of power relationships, and the implication that nature is, for victims, only a temporary refuge.

However, the heroine also receives beautiful dresses at the primary site of magic: the grave and hazel tree where she has already become accustomed to having her wishes granted by the doves. In the 1857 rendering, it must be noted that the heroine's activity is quite pronounced, as if she were cooperating with nature, as opposed to being a helpless supplicant. She has wept and prayed on the grave, and thus she appears to feel entitled to employ incantations that direct the magic at hand. As she contemplates sorting the lentils, she calls out: "all ihr Vöglein unter dem Himmel, kommt und helft mir lesen, die guten ins Töpfchen, die schlechten ins Kröpfchen" (Grimm 1997: 139) ("Oh, you tame pigeons, you turtledoves, and all you birds under heaven, come and help me pick the good ones for the little pot, the bad ones for your little crop," Zipes 2003: 80). When seeking clothes for the ball, she calls out: "Bäumchen, rüttel dich und schüttel dich, wirf Gold und Silber über mich" (Grimm 1997: 140) ("Shake and wobble, little tree! Let gold and silver fall all over me," Zipes 2003: 81).

Cinderella's active role in the 1857 portrayal aligns with Judeo-Christian notions of "dominion" over nature (Garrard 2012: 117–18), according to which hard work enables people to reap nature's benefits. Wilhelm Grimm actively contributes to this model in his editing since the 1812 version offers a very different perspective on the relationship between human and environment. In this case, it is not the girl who issues orders to the birds, but rather the birds that initiate this help when they ask the dejected heroine: "Aschenputtel, sollen wir dir helfen Linsen lesen?" (Derungs 1999: 80) ("Cinderella, do you want us to help you sort the lentils?" Ashliman 1998: n.p.) and "Aschenputtel, willst du auch auf den Ball gehen und tanzen?" (Derungs: 81) ("Cinderella, would you like to go dancing at the ball?" Ashliman). Clearly, the heroine exercises less power over nature than in 1857. It is also the birds, in 1812, who suggest to Cinderella that she go to the tree for help. More strikingly, the birds here possess the human faculty of speech – in 1857, they exhibit this ability only at the very end of the tale (which causes a logical dissonance due to their initial passivity and speechlessness as opposed to their later harsh assertiveness). Nature in 1812 is benevolent and omniscient, actively guides Cinderella's fate, and takes on a more divine role; by contrast, the birds in 1857 have become compliant helpers. One might also argue that the more communicative role of the birds in 1812 offers the isolated heroine a quasi-human face and interlocutor (as in the case of Basile's and Perrault's tales), whereas the Grimms' editing eventually undoes this comforting aspect. The later version separates the natural and human realms as it removes the

blurred lines caused by the birds' agency and capacity for speech in 1812. At the same time, the impression that divinity and nature represent overlapping entities is noticeably diminished by 1857.

The version written by Perrault, which appeared with the first wave of courtly French literary fairy tales of the 1690s, imagines a quasi-human helper figure. The fairy godmother, who would reappear in Disney's 1950 version, making the literary Perrault tale "iconic" for generations of Americans, is the most consistently anthropomorphic helper of all well-known Cinderella versions (as opposed to brief transformations of nature into a quasi-human form in "Yeh-hsien" or Basile's tale). While Perrault's fairy godmother does rely on nature to help her charge, she clearly – like humans – wields power over lesser creatures such as the mice, lizards, rats, and the pumpkin, which she transforms into the mode of transport to the ball. The supernatural helper in this version has a courtly, albeit sentimental, human face, and is based on a long tradition of fairies (especially evident in French and Italian tales), nurses, and older female helpers. Retaining allusions to the potential magical transformation of natural resources, Perrault thus moves away from the emphasis upon Cinderella's relationship with and power over the realm of nature found in this tale type, a power that is retained in the German tradition but eroded (and rendered more anthropocentric) by the Grimms' editing.

NATURE AND PUNISHMENT: RESOLUTION IN THE CINDERELLA CYCLE

The reference to nature as an "actor" is part of the resolution in several tales in the Cinderella cycle. In "Yeh-hsien," for example, falling stones kill the stepmother and stepsister – an "act of God" with clear moral implications. The seemingly inanimate realm is either directed by a divine entity or, as an independent actor, seeks retribution for the evil women's deeds. Conversely, the Egyptian "The Princess in the Suit of Leather" (type 510B) does not involve an active natural agent of retribution; instead, the old matchmaker is thrown off a cliff (Tatar 1999: 137). Similarly judged by humans, the eponymous Tebaldo of Straparola's tale is quartered for his terrible deeds. Perrault, on the other hand, forgoes any mention of punishment in "Donkey-Skin" and "The Glass Slipper," opting instead for scenes of forgiveness, whereas Basile limits the sisters' comeuppance to frustration at seeing their neglected sister marry the king.

Instances of retribution in association with natural factors can thus be juxtaposed with tales that contain human-directed punishments. The most prominent resolution, which involves both forms of retribution, is found in the conclusion to the Grimm tale. Notably, this resolution becomes harsher in the course of the editors' progressive shaping of the tale. By 1857, the stepsisters first maim their feet in an effort to usurp Cinderella's position and fit the slipper, only to subsequently have their eyes pecked out at the wedding ceremony. By opting for endings that evoke medieval punishments or an Old Testament "eye for an eye" logic (although, to be precise, the punishment far outweighs the deed in this case), the brothers rendered this resolution bloodier in the course of successive editions. The foot maiming is already present in 1812 – in which case the doves merely enact justice by calling out the truth: "Blut ist im Schuck [Schuh]" (Derungs 1999: 84) ("There's blood in the shoe," Ashliman 1998: n.p.) – but in 1819, the Grimms added the blinding by the doves, who are waiting perched in

the hazel tree. In other words, the sisters' punishment is initially self-inflicted and the result of their vanity or the mother's pressure, whereas the Grimms' editing creates a scenario in which they are judged. The birds' actions may be attributed to divine justice or to nature's allegiance with the heroine – be it for disinterested moral reasons or owing to the mother's power beyond the grave.

In the final analysis, the process of the Grimms' editing limited the benign role of the deceased mother as well as the active engagement of the birds as helpers. On the other hand, the brothers enhanced the birds' role as agents of retribution. Cinderella's power, which gradually increases her ability to have the birds do her bidding, also takes on a vengeful note. After proclaiming her rightful status at the story's end, the birds perch on her shoulder as she leaves her native home, and it is therefore not far-fetched to assume that Cinderella, at very least, condones their harsh punitive behavior at her wedding ceremony. Far from being a morally neutral realm, nature mirrors humanity: taking sides, manifesting power, and assuring dominance of a chosen ruler. Yet it pays an increasing price: a pear tree is sacrificed on the way to Cinderella's social success, and the doves lose their roost, as the birds and hazel tree are ultimately reduced to instruments of power.

Given the involvement of nature as a helper in the Cinderella tales – a role that is most prominent in the Grimms' versions – one must take into account the influence of this tale type on twentieth and twenty-first century perceptions of the natural realm. Much as the Cinderella tale has significantly impacted contemporary society's sense of romantic ideals, I would argue that the Grimms' tales have contributed to a modern sense of the multi-layered significance of the environment for humankind. Nature, in this view, is intrinsically helpful and partial to humans if treated with respect. At the same time, the Christian framework of the Grimms promotes the role of humans as stewards over nature, whereas in secularized popular culture, this perspective cedes to the original, rather pantheistic perception of humans as a mere part of a powerful realm of nature. This more egalitarian model, which deprives humans of their sense of omnipotence, is in certain ways revived in eco-critical thought. Therefore, the Cinderella tale offers a proto-environmental model that teaches dependence on nature in a physical, but also emotional, sense. On the other hand, this tale does not fully address the consequences of the exploitation of nature; Cinderella respects nature as it serves her, but there is no indication that the birds satisfy needs of their own. Indeed, the All-Fur characters even more clearly use nature for purely anthropocentric aims. Thus, nature's existence in these tales is only portrayed as relevant where flora and fauna assist humankind. Yet the idea of Cinderella's curfew, inserted into certain versions, does offer a reminder that nature and the supernatural will abandon humans if exploited and so sounds a cautionary note about the fundamental generosity of the natural realm.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

TALES RETOLD

Fairy tales in contemporary European visual art



Sarah Bonner

“Many are the deceivers,” announces the speaker of Anne Sexton’s poem “Red Riding Hood,” offering a foretaste of the treachery that is to follow (1971: 73). This statement broadly encompasses the deceit of societies and individuals, of tale tellers and history, and not least, the wolf:

Long ago
there was a strange deception:
a wolf dressed in frills,
a kind of transvestite.

(Sexton 1971: 73)

This exploration of deception runs through Sexton’s poems in dark parody of the Grimms’ tales she appropriates. And it is this theme of deceit that unites the fine art practice of a number of European artists who use the traditional fairy tale as a vehicle for addressing gender expectations in Euro–American society in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In this chapter, the subversive strategies used to rethink gender codes and conventions employed by fine artists referencing fairy tales in their work will be examined. This analysis will involve consideration of the role played by the “anti-tale” in the reworked fairy tales of contemporary artists, and of challenges posed by these artworks to traditional constructions of gender, especially as they are manifested in representations of the innocent persecuted heroine, the good fairy godmother or the wicked stepmother. Revelation, by way of deception and ambiguity, is practiced by the artists and the tales they tell. Fairy-tale expectation of the feminine is undone; morality, agency, intelligence and performance are examined, and alternative futures are revealed for three of the most prominent models of womanhood embedded in the traditional tales.

Although pre-twentieth century female authors and their tales are relatively little known in comparison to their male counterparts, the female presence in fairy tales is indisputable. Either as protagonists or storytellers, the female is a pervasive presence and has become mythologized as the archetypal tale teller. The female storyteller evidently had a voice, but until the late twentieth century an anonymous or marginalized

one. In the twentieth century, and particularly since the 1960s and 1970s (parallel to the rise of feminism, other rights movements and the disciplines of cultural and media studies), cultural conditions have shifted. In a politicized postmodern era the fairy tale has been adopted by female authors as a tool to redress, predominantly, the gender inequalities that have become a legacy of the Grimm Brothers' collections. In the same period the female voice in fairy tale has been further strengthened by the emergence of female fine artists who have taken on the mantle of soothsayer and through their work explored the possibilities of gender representation in the visual fairy tale. These female artists are radical in their retellings; sisters of their literary forebears, their protagonists speak of independence, action, courage, dissent, rebellion and darker motivations that do not align easily with the conventional female characters that have dominated the popular fairy tale.

The traditional performance of gender, specifically femininity, which has been dominant for centuries is now being overthrown in favor of a number of alternative readings which, in visual format, are the subject of this chapter. This representation of alternative fairy-tale femininity allows the viewer of these works to consider an unconventional possibility, in which the young and more mature women of fairy tales reject their traditional selves and reveal something more defiant, morally questionable, and altogether more ambiguous than those we are comfortable and familiar with. Through the works analyzed here we encounter a wolf-hooded Little Red Riding Hood, a menacing Blue Fairy, and the wicked stepmother stripped of all but a collar of lamb's hearts.

ANTI-TALES

Traditional European fairy tales featuring a female protagonist typically conveyed to their readers the need for caution, modesty, chastity and comportment on the part of young women. Simultaneously, they also offered warnings about the potential for wickedness and corruption in the mature female in society. These values, conveyed by endless iterations of the tales, have endured in both the tales and in the societies receiving of them. Of the best known European authors and collectors of tales, Charles Perrault, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, and Hans Christian Andersen were unambiguous in their warnings about the need for female virtue. In the twentieth century, Walt Disney likewise adopted the popular tales, sanitized them and devised a formulaic utopian vision of what life might be like if one abided by the codes set down in the tales – a utopian vision that has increasingly been revealed as dystopian in feminist reconsiderations of these stories.

The rejection of the traditional tale in its sanitized and popular state is what connects the artists addressed in this chapter. If the works analyzed here can be described as dystopian, in many ways this dystopia emerges as preferable to the somnambulant utopia peddled by the conventional telling of the popular tales.

Fine artists take two broad approaches to incorporating traditional fairy tales in their work: first, they reference the popular or most well-known tales explicitly; second, they draw upon fragments of fairy-tale narratives and appropriate these tropes into artworks more obliquely (see Zipes 2012: 136–7). An example of the latter practice is Cornelia Parker's collaboration with actress Tilda Swinton entitled *The Maybe* (1995) (Figure 36.1). In this installation piece, Swinton slept eight hours a day in a glass case in the Serpentine Gallery, located in Hyde Park, London. The work



Figure 36.1 Cornelia Parker, *The Maybe* (1995). Installation at the Serpentine Gallery, London. A collaboration between Cornelia Parker and Tilda Swinton. Courtesy of the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London.

is reminiscent of both “Snow White” and “Sleeping Beauty” in its use of an inert female figure, as well as in its location (though here city parkland stands in for fairy-tale forest). The casting of Swinton is especially significant given her role as Orlando, the gender-bending time traveler in Sally Potter’s 1992 film of the same name, which was in turn based upon Virginia Woolf’s novel of 1928. As is the case in *Orlando*, Parker’s work invites the viewer to become voyeur of Swinton, in the process using protagonist, props and setting to challenge expectations of gender and genre, as well as contemporary society’s customary voyeuristic tendencies. In this work, furthermore, royalty is exchanged for celebrity, an alternative currency in the twenty-first century. For a work of subtlety and quietude, one that is ostensibly about the passage of time, this piece is an excellent example of how the fairy-tale narrative pervades the collective unconscious, and how we seek new and alternative expressions of the tales that have shaped our cultural imaginations.

The term “anti-tale,” which might be applied to these artworks, was first coined in 1929 in André Jolles’ study *Einfache Formen* (Simple Forms). As a genre, the anti-tale is argued to have existed alongside but in tension with traditional fairy tales (MacAra and Calvin 2011: 4). As Catriona McAra and David Calvin explain: “the anti-tale takes aspects of the fairy-tale genre, and its equivalent genres, and re-imagines, subverts, inverts, deconstructs or satirises elements of them to present an alternate narrative interpretation, outcome or morality” (2011: 4). The anti-tale, alternatively put, offers a number of strategies to undo, undermine and present alternative readings than those reinforced by conventional iterations of the traditional tale.

In what follows, similar challenges to the conventional outcomes of fairy tales will be explored in the work of Vanessa Jane Phaff, Paula Rego and Alice Maher, who offer challenges to gender expectation and normative morality through subversive repetitions of “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Pinocchio” and “Snow White” respectively. In analysing these artworks, Judith Butler’s theories of gender construction and deconstruction, as presented in *Gender Trouble* (1990), will be useful, especially in relation to applications of the fairy-tale genre in contemporary art works more broadly. Central to Butler’s argument is the notion that gender is constituted by a repeated performance of gendered qualities discrete to the feminine or the masculine. The re-iterative nature of these performative acts ensures that the gender performed becomes internalized, naturalized and consensually agreed; through this reiterative practice, in other words, the acts become normalized. However, the normality of these roles is entirely dependent on the performance of them, and this is shaped in turn by the expectation of the time and place in which they are being performed. Within the normative state of compulsory heterosexuality in the developed Western world, the performances of discrete femininity and masculinity are essential to maintain the (procreative) stability in society. To be outside of the gender duality, in other words, to perform otherwise (or fail to perform), is to transgress the norm and upset the binary distinctions that are reiterated with every performance.

As Butler (2006) suggests, as long as the performance is uninterrupted the gender dichotomy is maintained. Any divergence or disruption of the performance brings punitive measures for those that do not meet the accepted standard of the performance. The performative enactment of visible homosexuality (effeminate men and butch lesbians), for instance, highlights the ambiguity of gender specification and often functions to exclude the person from dominant culture. Thus, the successful performance of gender initiates and legitimises that specific expression until history shifts, invoking another expression. In Butler’s words:

Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction compels our belief in its necessity and naturalness.

(2006: 190)

The accepted standards of gender, for Butler, are conveyed through various media transmitters, not least the fairy tale in popular culture. When heroines and heroes are

described as beautiful and behave according to specific gender norms, the performance of gender is legitimized for the individual and the collective.

But what of the anti-tale? According to Butler's theory, an alternative depiction, or act of gender, interrupts the conventional and consensual reading of gender, exposing the artifice of the construct. In these terms, fairy tales are ideal candidates for gender subversion. The fairy-tale genre is a historically fluid cultural form in which gender identity is repeated in an exterior space (each individual tale), but informs an interior understanding in the reader/viewer. In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), Butler asks what it would mean "to 'cite' the law to produce it differently, to 'cite' the law in order to reiterate and co-opt its power, to expose the heterosexual matrix and to displace the effect of its necessity?" (Butler 1993: 15). The re-articulation of gender norms constructed from within the fairy-tale genre involves citing the law differently—the heterosexual matrix may then be reconceived of as "the temporalized regulation of signification, and not as a quasi-permanent structure" (22). Through the mis-repetition of the visual fairy tale, the regulatory signification is revealed as temporary.

The visual interpretations of fairy tales addressed below have drawn on repeated tropes and themes from fairy tales, albeit subversively. Such repetition involves the use of parody, a common strategy of subversion or critique. However, as Butler notes, parody in isolation is not subversive (2006: 189). She posits that "certain kinds of parodic repetitions [are] effectively disruptive, truly troubling," in contrast to those "repetitions [that] become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (2006: 189). In what follows, the analysis of three anti-tale art works will reveal how fairy-tale narration in parodic and subversive visual form begins to unpack and destabilize some aspects of gender performance.

THE INNOCENT PERSECUTED HEROINE

Rotkäppchen (2002, Little Red Riding Hood) (Figure 36.2), by British artist (working and living in the Netherlands) Vanessa Jane Phaff, is a fine art anti-tale that invokes possibility and ambiguity in the construction of gender. In this work, consisting of a series of 36 silk screen prints, Phaff has altered the narrative flow of the tale, disassembled the cast, introduced new locations and fundamentally challenged the role of both the girl and the wolf. In a graphic style and using only red and black on a white ground she reconsiders the narrative and function of the tale. Her use of closely framed images inhibits a wider contextualization, yet Phaff introduces symbols, variations in scale and visual devices such as multi-layering to suggest alternative possible contexts. The piece is displayed in a grid of nine by four panels. Slightly off-centre are four images, white lines on a red ground, that act together to make a line drawing of the wolf in front of the girl, both confronting the viewer with an unobscured gaze.

Moral ambiguity plays a role in this work from the ostensible beginning (determined only by the reading of the work left to right, top to bottom). In the first panel (top left), a diminutive female figure in a hood and cape considers herself in a mirror, her features are blank in this panel, there is an open door beside her. Continuing to read the panels along the top row the viewer can deduce a possible act of truancy, the rejection of time and day-dreaming in the forest. Already the tone of moral instability

is set. References to other tales are made such as the one of the hooded girl holding a bird, resonant with Disney's animated film *Snow White* (1937). In one panel the girl is a cut-out, with notches so that she can be made three-dimensional, a potential subject for customization. Elsewhere, the house as haven is rejected with an ever-larger red cross, targets are identified, dreams and reality merge. Using a very simple language Phaff seems to reduce the traditional tale to component parts, but intermingled with these are parts of her own making. The girl makes friends with the wolf, she dodges a target, she is marked for amputation in one panel and in another lies asleep in bed with the wolf. Phaff's visual language is spare yet complex.

"Little Red Riding Hood" has traditionally been considered the epitome of cautionary tales and the trend is not bucked here. However, where the traditional tale taught girls to be obedient and good, to be afraid of wolves (in all their guises), Phaff redirects the cautionary message. The figure we are uncertain of in this visual narrative is Little Red Riding Hood. Vanity and narcissism are established in the first panel aligning her with the queen from "Snow White," a message reinforced with the open door to the forest. The wolf is not presented as the aggressor, rather the girl approaches the wolf, offering her hand for it to take her scent. It is impossible to sustain a consistent narrative or establish a message or meaning in this piece of work; absence, exile, tenderness, companionship and aggression can all be identified, the latter enacted by a panel of children seemingly yelling at Little Red Riding Hood. It seems that the girl finds comfort in the company of the wolf, both outcast from society, both considered other; as bed-fellows they sleep peacefully.

The dreamscape design of some of the panels, where multiple layers are combined to such an effect, is reminiscent of Neil Jordan's filmic adaptation of Angela Carter's tale *The Company of Wolves* (1984). A similar uncertainty and ambiguity is played out in both versions, and neither Phaff nor Jordan's response to the fairy-tale tradition offers a conclusion. In Phaff's work, a possible conclusion lies in the panel illustrating the girl cropped by the left edge of the frame so the viewer sees only partial features and one eye narrowed to a slit (Figure 36.3). The most striking, disturbing and contextualizing detail of this panel is the wolf hood that hangs from her neck. On seeing this panel, the viewer is challenged to accept the complicity of girl and wolf, and perhaps also to assume the girl's destruction of the wolf, the hood having become a trophy. The girl becomes the wolf; the girl was perhaps the wolf all along. This image does not offer a conventional reading of the arrangement of panels, instead the viewer is invited back into a narrative that becomes circular with no beginning or end, and in which intention, digression and morality are rendered ambiguous.

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

Fairies play ambiguous roles in fairy tales. As fairy helpers, figured, most commonly, in the form of the fairy godmother, they are generally considered good; equally, however, a bad fairy may serve as a foil to accentuate the moral polarities of the tale. In Italian author Carlo Collodi's serialized literary tale *Pinocchio* (1881–1883), a fairy known as *La Fata dai Capelli Turchini* (The Fairy with Turquoise Hair) chastises, advises and helps Pinocchio, becoming his replacement mother figure. She offers advice and guidance and so meets the criteria for the good mother figure. This aspect of the fairy's role is further emphasized in Disney's animated film version of



Figure 36.3 Vanessa Jane Phaff, *Rotkäppchen* (detail) (2002).

Pinocchio (1940), in which the fairy helper becomes, more simply, the Blue Fairy. In the Portuguese artist, Paula Rego's, reconfiguration of the image of the Blue Fairy, however, the viewer's sense of the character from the literary and cinematic versions of this tale is fundamentally challenged and the set of nuanced assumptions about female power and its moral applications embodied in this figure are transformed.

In *The Blue Fairy Whispers to Pinocchio* (1995) (Figure 36.4), Rego isolates the pair against a very dark ground. The only light source in the work emanates from the characters. The image shows the Blue Fairy, considerably larger than Pinocchio in scale, seated and leaning forward to whisper into his ear. Her pose is casual and assured; her left arm hangs against Pinocchio's knee, and in her right hand she holds her wand. Pinocchio stands, back to the viewer, in front of the Blue Fairy, naked and with hands clenched into fists behind his back.

The combination of his stiff and putatively obedient stance, combined with the discrepancies in scale, serves to enhance the ambiguous power relations and gender roles suggested in the work. The effect is both oppressive and sinister. The ascription of the fairy's power over the male puppet is overt: she is larger and clothed, he diminutive and naked. In this work, the Blue Fairy's putative "goodness" is made ambiguous. Her role may still be disciplinary (he stands as if being scolded), but the primary role of nurturing commonly conferred on the replacement mother is absent in this work. In the discrepancies of scale and attire of the figures it is also possible to read implied notions of sexual manipulation in this work. Aside from Pinocchio's nakedness and clenched fists, the viewer is ignorant of his expression as he faces the Blue Fairy. It is she who offers the clues to the possible meanings of this relationship. Although recognizably dressed as a female, there are aspects of masculinity about this figure: physically in the bare feet, strong facial features and phallic wand, but also behaviorally in the dominant and actively powerful position she occupies (and it may be noted here that Rego's depictions of women generally tend towards



Figure 36.4 Paula Rego, *The Blue Fairy Whispers to Pinocchio* (1995). © Paula Rego, courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art.

a masculinization, particularly in the bone structure; a tendency that serves to blur the distinctions of gender and to signal that, in Rego's work, beauty does not signify femininity). The Blue Fairy's masculine features exaggerate the diminutive position of Pinocchio and draw into question the femininity – and associated notions of caregiver – of the Blue Fairy.

This work overturns traditional assumptions about femininity in relation to motherhood. Rego offers an image of surrogate motherhood as oppressive and sinister. This ambiguity is derived from the discrepancy between social expectation and visual depiction. In this work, Rego has reiterated a relationship from the original tale but with a difference. The visual mis-repetition of the Blue Fairy into a morally dubious figure shifts the tone of the tale. *The Blue Fairy Whispers to Pinocchio*, due

to its visual organization, marks a departure from the traditional maternal example that implies a natural connection between femininity and caring. Rego thus upsets the traditional and socially accepted attributes of maternal femininity by arranging the female in a position of potential threat to the child.

THE STEPMOTHER

Unlike the fairy godmother (or the Blue Fairy above), and in terms of identity management, the fairy-tale stepmother is frequently presented as the moral opposite of the absent biological mother. The former female figure carries connotations of evil, and the latter of goodness; one is lacking in the fundamental feminine trait of caretaking skills, the other is presented as a natural mother. In the traditional versions of the tale “Snow White,” moreover, the character of Snow White and her stepmother are repeatedly pitted as opposites in age, nature, agency, knowledge, ambition, and moral stature. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in the analysis of this story offered in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), further explore the values associated with both characters: “the queen ... is a plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch, an artist, an impersonator, a woman of almost infinite creative energy, witty, wily, and self absorbed” (Gilbert and Gubar 1984: 38–9). Snow White in comparison is a child, passive and docile.

Irish artist, Alice Maher, explores the traditional stereotyping of the stepmother in her work *Collar* (2003) (Figure 36.5). Where Paula Rego refers to the fairy tale directly in *The Blue Fairy Whispers to Pinocchio*, taking visual cues from the Disney film rendition of the tale, Maher refers to the fairy tale “Snow White” obliquely. In this work, Maher alludes to the “Snow White” narrative from the queen’s point of view, and the viewer is invited to believe that the queen has overcome Snow White through her display of hearts mounted as a collar. Indeed, the viewer may surmise that she has overcome a number of Snow Whites, one for each heart on her collar. In this work Maher offers the viewer a photographic image of a mature, but not elderly, woman. The model wears no visible clothing, her hair is tied back but not dressed, she is stripped of make-up and is adorned with a necklace or collar made from the hearts of lambs. The collar is made up of at least five fresh hearts, the blood and fluids from the hearts stain the woman’s skin.

Although not a direct reference to the fairy tale it is possible to identify the tropes of “Snow White” conveyed through this image. When the queen’s magic mirror fatefully replies that she is no longer the fairest in the land the thwarted stepmother seeks to destroy Snow White; the girl is no longer her ward but suddenly her rival in the stakes of beauty and desirability, and for this reason, the narratives of fertility and social value come into play. The queen orders a huntsman to take Snow White to the forest and kill her; he is to bring back her heart as proof of death. As the heart that is returned to the queen is that of a deer and not Snow White, however, the queen endeavors to complete the job herself using all the trappings of vanity and femininity, the hair comb and the lace stays. The poisoned apple, the symbol of stolen innocence, is the more successful of the three attempts, albeit it can only induce a temporary fate.

An initial reading identifies the woman as the jealous and bloodthirsty queen, collecting her trophies on a collar. However, a more nuanced reading draws on the idea that the hearts represent, for the queen, a grasping of youth. By adorning herself



Figure 36.5 Alice Maher, *Collar* (2003).

with the lambs' hearts the qualities of youth may be transmitted to her aging body, certainly they could act as disguise, even as talisman against the inevitable physical decline of womanhood. However, even as the hearts stain her skin with a rosy complexion, the attempt is futile; no matter how many hearts are threaded onto her collar the queen is rendered powerless. Implicitly evoked here is the old misogynist adage, *mutton dressed as lamb*, which alludes to the distractions and deceptions employed by women to remain youthful and useful in a society that values youth over age in the female body.

Maher's queen figure thus becomes ambiguous to us. She is at once a jealous despot with a bloodlust as she gathers her hearts as trophies and symbols of might, and an aging woman seeking to retain her youth by extreme measures – an interpretation reinforced by the fact that the hearts belong to snow-white lambs that symbolize spring and speak of becoming. However, a third or extended reading can be made of this piece in which, as a result of her misguided vanity, the queen is being punished. The collar becomes a yoke around her neck, a weighty physical reminder of her fading youth. The hearts stain an aging skin with spilt blood; they do not transfer the plump rosy flesh of youth. The queen is condemned by both her own hand and societal expectation to carry with her the symbols of what she is not.

In this work, the viewer is invited to recognize not just Snow White's stepmother but everywoman. She is one of numerous stepmothers throughout the fairy-tale tradition that have sought to fend off old age. Unlike other queens that have consumed and continue to consume hearts, Maher makes this queen human and of this world; the *adornment* of hearts rather than the *consumption* of the organs offers a tacit nod to the deceit peddled by the beauty industry. Yet, the maturing woman in Western society that concedes to this deceit is condemned to wear the yoke of youth as punishment for vanity (albeit a vanity imposed by the standards of physical beauty demanded by western society more broadly).

CONCLUSION

In 1971, Anne Sexton wrote about deceivers and cast her net wide to include the tales, the tale tellers and society. Based on the actions and appropriations made by artists since that time the accusation is still pertinent over 45 years later. However, the deceit lies at the door of those that use the traditional tale without pause to consider the messages conveyed about gender – and indeed about race, class, sexuality and bodily ability. This passive regurgitation serves to peddle out-dated ideas of who and how we should be, perpetuating the passive ideals of femininity to children living in a world where agency and self-worth are essential attributes for survival. The anti-tale works against this passive perpetuation. What might be seen, on the face of it, as being deceitful (the complicity of girl and wolf, of dubious moral standards in the fairy godmother, and the measures employed by the childless mother to maintain her youth) is closer to an essential truth played out in real lives in the twenty-first century. The message in these anti-tales is about the complexity of personality, the skills needed to interact with and be accepted in society. It is about inclusion and tolerance as much as it is about caution and an intelligent understanding of what that means. Jack Zipes proposes that the anti-tales in visual form “are necessary to disrupt and confront clichés and bad habits. They are necessary to shake up the world and sharpen our gaze” (2012: 136). Kendra Reynolds goes further to warn of the dangers of consuming the formulaic and derivative traditional tale that has been taken out of time and bears little relevance to the society it serves: “if women keep overdosing on the anaesthetic of fairy tales and patriarchal myths, then ignoring the reality may become fatal” (Reynolds 2014: 43).

This chapter has dealt with art works made by female artists in Europe and the readings that have been made address alternative expressions of gender. Parker and Swinton, Phaff, Rego and Maher have all interrupted the pervasive nature of the traditional fairy-tale genre. Strategies have varied, Phaff and Rego adopt the tales directly, appropriating the existing visual language based in popular culture, Maher, Parker and Swinton have been indirect in their referencing of the tales, taking only tropes and motifs from the traditional genre. All of the artists have disrupted the accepted reading of traditional tales, mostly through the strategy of deconstruction. Phaff has reduced the visual language of her work then built up the layers and multiplied meaning; Rego inverts our expectations of what ‘motherhood’ or the ‘maternal’ should be by introducing aspects of the masculine and menace to her work. Parker and Swinton undermine expectations of femininity and masculinity, of celebrity and voyeurism; Parker’s *The Maybe* is absent of gender and that upsets the viewer’s

understanding of how to look, and to possess through looking. Maher disrobes the queen rendering her an everywoman as she wears her trophies as a yoke of youth. The trick these artists have pulled off is to subvert the repetition of gender construction. As Butler stated in *Gender Trouble*:

The critical task is ... to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them.

(2006: 201)

By adopting fairy-tale narratives and tropes differently, artists are intervening and interrupting the conventional and consensual. What they offer instead is a mis-repetition, an alternative reading of the traditional, thus opening up the possibility of thinking differently about the constitution and performance of gender.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

NEW MATERIALISM AND CONTEMPORARY FAIRY-TALE FICTION



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“All the natural laws of the world were held in suspension here” (Carter 2006: 50), Angela Carter’s narrator observes of the enchanted castle in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon,” capturing the fairy-tale tradition’s irreverence to the commonly accepted laws of material reality. Entering the world of the fairy tale means discarding preconceived notions about nature, flesh, animals or objects as fixed, thoughtless or inert and, instead, embracing the irrationality of the supernatural in an “animist landscape” (Warner 2014: 21) where the material world is made active, given agency and endowed with wonder. In *Vibrant Matter*, new materialist scholar Jane Bennett calls for an appreciation of the vibrant “vitality” of nonhuman (material) life; that is, an acknowledgement of “the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities and tendencies of their own” (2010: viii). Through the anthropomorphic enlivening of materiality, fairy tales have for centuries fictionalized (if simplistically) the vision of existence new materialist discourse has recently encouraged, in which nature, materiality and nonhuman life are not the passive, inert Others of the rational human mind – as the Humanist paradigm has long upheld – but are “imbued with activity, with their own forces and unpredictability” (Grosz 2005: 7) that disrupt their ‘natural’ subordination. While the dominant trend of contemporary fairy-tale scholarship and rewriting has primarily focused on the natural as linguistic construction, this chapter uses a new materialist lens to consider how the natural/material might be reimagined in fairy-tale revisions to reveal its own agency in shaping the world. In an attempt to widen the discussion about fairy-tale literature and its ability to disrupt dominant hierarchies, this chapter will consider how contemporary authors have used the enlivened, wondrous depictions of nature, bodies and matter found in traditional European tales to reimagine existence as a processual and interconnected web of dynamic forces free from deterministic laws of nature. In these contemporary fictions, I look for “counterstories” (Bennett 2001: 8) of nature, bodies and materiality; literary conjectures of a lively material existence with the potential to alter the narrative of nonhuman inertia.

DUALISM, NEW MATERIALISM AND NATURE

Ever since Descartes attributed agency and rationality to the soul or mind and cast the material or corporeal in the role of the soul's dialectic other, nature, matter and flesh have been trapped in assumptions of irrationality, givenness and fixity, defined by and through deterministic laws of nature. "What Descartes accomplished was not really the separation of mind from body (a separation which had already been long anticipated in Greek philosophy since the time of Plato) but the separation of soul from nature" (Grosz 1994: 6). It was a separation that would, alongside the Newtonian laws of cause and effect, guide the trajectory of Western philosophy and science, as the Humanist agenda of the Enlightenment era further embedded matter and nature in a supposedly inherent incapacity for reason, autonomy and logic. These assumptions heralded the division between nature and culture, paving the way for the justification of the supremacy of man and the "naturally" occurring hierarchies within society. As Coole and Frost suggest, "[t]he Cartesian-Newtonian understanding of matter ... yields a conceptual and practical domination of nature as well as a specifically modern attitude or ethos of subjectivist potency" (2010: 8). The rationality of the human subject became the measure and marker through and against which everything else was assessed, casting the material world of nature – the environment, matter, flesh and all nonhuman life – as subordinate to the supremacy of Man's consciousness, language and culture.

For though the human mind belongs, of course, to both men and women, the Humanist paradigm of the rational, thinking subject was firmly tied to a (European, well-educated) masculinity. Stacy Alaimo observes that

[n]ature, as a philosophical concept, a potent ideological node, and a cultural repository of norms and moralism, has long been waged against women, people of color, indigenous peoples, queers, and the lower classes. Paradoxically, women, the working class, travel people, and people of color have been denigrated because of their supposed "proximity" to nature, even as queers have been castigated for being "unnatural."

(2008: 239)

The assumed dichotomy between the natural and cultural thus enabled (and was used to justify) domination of the natural world, but also of marginalized sections of society. As Alaimo notes:

[t]he dual meanings of nature [as both biological and behavioral] converge at the site of woman, fixing her in a vortex of circular arguments. Woman is closer to nature and is thus inferior; woman is inferior because nature has made her so.

(2000: 3)

Under the terms of the dualistic worldview, nature exists as the oppressed and the tool of the oppressor, with its apparent fixity and adherence to natural laws justifying its inferiority.

Dualistic hierarchies have been the primary target of the posthuman, new materialisms emerging over the last two decades. In response to the feminist

poststructural movement and its discussion of the female body as discursive, early ‘corporeal feminists’ (as they were initially known) such as Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti drew on the work of postmodern thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Donna Haraway, as well as the monism of Spinoza, to call for a more “embodied and embedded” (Braidotti 2013: 51) vision of subjectivity that acknowledges nature “in terms of dynamic forces, fields of transformation and upheaval, rather than as a static fixity, passive, worked over, transformed and dynamized only by culture” (Grosz 2005: 7). They conceived that it was only by reimagining nature/culture and mind/body binaries as a “continuum” (Braidotti 2013: 2), or a “Möbius strip” through which “one side becomes another” (Grosz 1994: xii), that the dualistic hierarchies of social and environmental oppression could be truly dissolved. This shift in thinking would involve a radical reworking of conceptions of matter and bodies, of course, but primarily of nature, which had been so contentious to feminists intent on avoiding the determinism of those pernicious ‘natural laws.’

Although the dualisms that structured Western society were challenged by the postmodern, poststructuralist agendas of the second half of the twentieth century, for the new materialists, a social constructivist approach typically committed nature and biology to the realm of discourse. Concerned by the “flight from nature” (Alaimo 2000: 4) in postmodern feminist attempts to close the gap between men and women, new materialist thinkers came to see the “linguistic turn” and its emphasis on demonstrating “how cultural practices produce what is experienced as the ‘natural’” (Bennett 2010: 1) as a development that further denigrates nature by relegating it to a mere construction of language. As Alaimo and Susan Hekman acknowledge: “[a]lthough postmoderns claim to reject all dichotomies, there is one dichotomy that they appear to embrace almost without question: language/reality” (2008: 2). Reality, as the natural, pre-given material realm, thus remains the Other of rational thought and language, maintaining the supremacy of humanity as the creator of language. Coole and Frost thus suggest that

the more textual approaches associated with the so-called cultural turn are increasingly being deemed inadequate for understanding contemporary society, particularly in light of some of its most urgent challenges regarding environment, demographic, geopolitical, and economic change.

(2010: 2–3)

New materialist theorists often define their positions in response to poststructuralism, but their emphasis on material agency does not inherently challenge social constructivism. “It is entirely possible,” Coole and Frost argue, “to accept social constructionist arguments while also insisting that the material realm is irreducible to culture or discourse and that cultural artefacts are not arbitrary vis-à-vis nature” (2010: 27). To think from a new materialist perspective is merely to think about how bodies, nature, biology, material objects and nonhuman life are – interwoven with language and thought – actively participating in the construction of existence. In fact, such visions of nature and matter as active co-constructors of existence arise, in no small part, from the work of postmodern thinkers such as Haraway and Deleuze. While Haraway departed from poststructural theory in her assertion that nature “is made, but not entirely by humans; it is a co-construction among humans and

non-humans” (1992: 297), Deleuze, who saw his work as “vitalist” (Coole and Frost 2010: 10), sought to radically reimagine existence as a material and discursive process of becoming. The vital materialisms that emerge from the linguistic landscapes of postmodernity do not, then, arise to contest language’s ability to construct reality, matter and nature, but to demonstrate how materiality impacts discourse, constructing existence collaboratively in a series of dynamic interconnections. As Grosz suggests:

If nature, biology, and the material world are imbued with activity, with their own forces and unpredictability, then our concepts of the subject, culture, and the social order need to open themselves up to, rather than see themselves in opposition to, the natural order.

(2005: 7)

The natural order, like the cultural order, would thus be a dynamic, autonomous agency; not the Enlightenment vision of a deterministic, inert Other, but a fluid, creative co-creator of existence (Haraway 1992: 297).

FAIRY TALES AND NATURAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Considerations of nature in contemporary fairy-tale fiction and criticism have most often been aligned with the postmodern agenda that challenged deterministic depictions of ‘naturalness’ by highlighting their construction. Just as poststructural theorists attempted to tackle ideologically embedded, dualistic hierarchies through a focus on language, so too has much fairy-tale criticism and revisioning. Under the influence of Carter’s demythologizing project and the socio-historicist models of fairy-tale analysis from critics such as Jack Zipes (1979; 1985), Marina Warner (1995) and Cristina Bacchilega (1997), postmodern authors, directors, screenwriters and poets saw an opportunity to challenge the gendered, racial, heteronormative and class-based assumptions of naturalness that had been peddled in the dominant canon of European literary fairy tales through their own reimagined constructions. From the embers of the anthropological fantasy of fairy stories as “primordial, intact vessels of peasant wisdom” (Warner 2014: 133), and the subsequent psychoanalytic theories of the tales as archetypal narratives, the postmodern fairy-tale movement defiantly resisted the dominant ideological assumptions that had been reinforced through the traditional stories as ‘natural.’ *Stories are constructions; nature is a construction*, many of the fairy-tale writers affirmed, freeing the passive princesses and wicked witches from their reductive, oppositional positions, while simultaneously depicting nature as the creative construction of language.

However, though nature is, of course, always culturally mediated – in literature and otherwise – I contend that it is possible for the literary fairy tale to at once highlight the cultural constructions of nature, whilst also offering the potential for new materialist depictions of nature, matter and flesh which deny the duality of nature/culture and the centrality of language. The posthuman and new materialist decentering of the human mind through an enlivening of the material realm can be examined in contemporary fairy-tale fiction to reveal the complexities of the traditional fairy tale’s depiction of nature – as fluid and active on the one hand but fixed and passive on the other. With

the postmodern attempts to deconstruct assumptions of naturalness, as well as the fairy tale's preoccupation with nature and fluid depictions of material life, contemporary fairy-tale fiction need not be confined by the linguistic emphasis of the postmodern era. It can, instead, challenge the dualistic depictions of naturalness and channel the potentialities within the narratives to free nature from the constraints of 'natural laws.'

This is because, for all the fixed and deterministic depictions of nature perpetuated by the traditional European fairy tale, there exists too a vibrant and agentic natural world within those narratives; a world in which flowers can sing, weather can alter based on a whim and animals and humans coexist and intimately relate. "Animals speak," observes Marina Warner, "especially birds, and no one in a fairy tale is taken aback when rocks and trees and streams and waterfalls act under their own volition or shape-shift from one form to another" (2014: 21). It's a world of fluidity, where flesh transforms and bodies shapeshift, where fixity is reserved for morality but not for material bodies, which exist outside laws of biology. And, as Warner notes, "[w]hile magical life forces flow principally through natural phenomena – flora, fauna, bodies," the "vehicle of magical effects does not ... need to have possessed life in the first place: *inorganic* things are also animate and dynamic" (2014: 29). From the talking matchsticks of the Hans Christian Andersen stories, to the singing birds and self-propelling mops in Disney's princess films, the ongoing legacy of fairy tale and folktale is its wondrously alive and vibrant material world.

Of course, these animated depictions of talking, singing, dancing matter are anthropomorphic, and thus, some would argue, anthropocentric. Anthropomorphism – the attribution of human characteristics to the nonhuman – is a common and long-standing feature of literature. From Ovid to Aesop, folk to fairy tale, Wordsworth to Emily Brontë, Tolkien to Disney, the personification of nonhuman creatures, beings or objects is a prevalent trope in literature throughout Europe, and also worldwide. Anthropomorphic and personified depictions of nature have even been used explicitly – as in much Romantic literature – in attempts to connect humans with nature. Yet, as Bryan L. Moore observes, "since Plato at least, anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism have long worked in tandem, the former representing the world in human terms and the latter in proclaiming the whole world for human ends" (2008: 12). Circumventing human-centered views in the writing of humans for other humans is undoubtedly challenging when literature, by its very creation, relies on anthropocentrism. Fairy tales are invariably about human plights and journeys, and much of their magical animation of matter can be seen to advocate the superiority of man. Animals that assist protagonists, objects that come to life when certain words are spoken and dangerous woodlands that seem to exist only to cause human suffering are all tropes of fairy tale and folktale which affirm human centrality and linguistic power.

However, despite anthropomorphism's potential for perpetuating anthropocentrism, it can – if only from a limited human perspective – open up the conversation about the vitality of nonhuman life. Bennett suggests that "[w]e need to cultivate a bit of anthropomorphism – the idea that human agency has some echoes in nonhuman nature – to counter the narcissism of humans in charge of the world" (2010: xvi). While the anthropomorphism of traditional European fairy tale does not always enliven matter in a way that destabilizes matter/thought dichotomies, in contemporary literature that enlivening can take on a more vitalist significance. Contemporary authors, for all their poststructural concerns, can reveal in their own

animations of matter a far more complex and radical depiction of the agency of the nonhuman world. Through a new materialist lens even writers like Carter – with her fleshy, visceral fictions – might be seen to write the material into the discursive. The intricacies of fairy-tale fiction can reveal the alliance of postmodernity with new materiality as authors grapple with the nature/culture divides in their own varied and wondrous ways. I look now at two such texts from Philip Pullman and A.S. Byatt, both prominent voices in fairy-tale literature, to demonstrate how the European fairy tale can offer the potential for radical reworkings of matter and subjectivity.

PHILIP PULLMAN’S LIVING MATTER

In Philip Pullman’s trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, published between 1995 and 2000, objects are active, responsive, they have “intentions” (Pullman 2011: 798); they are *alive*. In a continuation of the fairy-tale animation of typically inanimate objects, Pullman’s epic adventure is littered with objects that act with conscious agency, particularly those made of metal. The alethiometer that thinks, the subtle knife that “knows” (505) and the armor that serves as the “soul” (196) of the panserbjørn are metals in intelligent, active forms whose effects on the events of the novel are complex, catalytic and characterful. Embodying traditional technology (the compass), weaponry (the knife) and protection (the armor), but given seemingly magical abilities that tie them to thought, these instruments offer complex and processual subjectivities that suggest alternative, if imperfect, depictions of material life. In contrast to the fixed, passive inertia of traditional visions of metal and the celebration of language over materiality, *His Dark Materials* draws instead from the vibrant animation of objects in European fairy tales to reimagine metal – a material primarily associated with fixity – as active and conscious; existing as part of an interconnected, material universe.

According to Santiago Colas (2005), Pullman’s trilogy is a welcome counter argument to classical dualist philosophy. “Plato’s story of truth,” Colas observes, “(like any correspondence story of truth that has been formulated since) assumes a division and an opposition between subject (the thinking entity) and object (the stuff out in the world the subject is thinking about)” (2005: 42). Pullman’s fiction, by contrast, evades such distinctions. Certainly, the dividing line between subject and object is one steadily occupied in *His Dark Materials*. Pullman’s objects, anthropomorphically enlivened as they so often are in the fairy tales that influence his work, subvert dominant binary oppositions through their conscious behaviors – the knife “has intentions too” (798), the alethiometer is “like a person, almost” (442) – complicating the thinking subject as divisible from inert matter. By reimagining matter in such a way Pullman questions the validity of our dualistic conceptions of existence, and suggests that if our ethical framework centers around goodness and evil pertaining to oppositions of thought and matter, it will always be morally bankrupt. His varied depictions of metal within the trilogy suggest an alternative, intelligent vision of objects that draws on the fairy tale whilst opening the trope up to more fluid subjectivities.

As Jane Bennett notes, metal is not an obvious choice for a consideration of vital materialism, not least because of its stoic associations with fixity and mechanism: “Who would choose *metal* as a symbol of vitality?” (2010: 55) she asks. Yet,

as Bennett goes on to observe, Deleuze and Guattari “name metal as the exemplar of a vital materiality; it is metal that best reveals this quivering effervescence; it is metal, bursting with a life” (2010: 55). As the iron in our blood, the electricity in our homes, the minerals in our vegetation and inevitably – pressed against our ears or semi-permanently affixed to our palms – the way in which we choose to communicate with each other, metal’s complex and ever-evolving manifestations blur the lines between vitality and stasis, opening up radical reimaginings of materiality. For theorists such as Bennett, Deleuze and Guattari, the dualistic depictions of metal as naturally passive and inert, as opposed to culturally and technologically active, dissolve upon analysis to reveal a vitally engaged and engaging substance with an embodied agency; a *life*. As a *living* process, metal’s capabilities and culpabilities within the world become manifold – it becomes a vital participant in an ever-changing existence.

These revitalized metallic embodiments can be seen first in fairy tales and the magical possibilities they gave to metals; the agency they afforded it, the spells under which it was cast. Pullman revitalizes the trope in *His Dark Materials*, endowing metal with the ability to think, feel and make conscious decisions, because in his multiverse “full of intentions” (280), “[e]verything out there,” including matter, “is alive” (331). To credit metallic matter with these claims of vitality is to create a new story of materiality, a story in which metal can play a part in the consciousness of existence and the construction of life by human and nonhuman *actors* (Latour 2004). These reconfigurations of metal and matter, these counterstories (Bennett 2001: 8) of materiality, have wider implications for the human subject, dismantling the subject/object, self/other dichotomies altogether.

Pullman’s materially-engaged trilogy is associated with fantasy fiction, but is embedded with fairy-tale tropes and images, from miniature people to Snow Queen-like mothers, and though often deemed a postmodern text (see Bird 2005), reveals a vision of materiality that has the potential to counter prevailing discourse about the separation of subject/object, nature/culture. In these novels, existence is undeniably material: daemons (the animal manifestation of the human soul) are *cut* or *torn* away; Will cuts holes in the “*almost* intangible edges of the air” (Pullman 2011: 526; italics added) acknowledging their tangibility; the interconnecting worlds are “fabric” (367) – you can touch, feel, cut and tear them – and as the depiction of Dust evokes the primordial dust, the characters and their very existence are held to matter and flesh. Far from the Cartesian conceptual reality of *res cogitans*, existence within these texts is physical, material, decidedly embodied and ultimately reflective of Pullman’s personal belief that

[t]he physical world is our home, this is where we live, we’re not creatures from somewhere else or in exile. This is our home and we have to make our homes here and understand that we are physical too, we are material creatures, we are born and we will die.

(Pullman 2002: n.p.)

CONSCIOUS MATERIALITIES IN A.S. BYATT

Physical realities are the focus too of another, more recent fairy-tale inspired novel: *The Children’s Book*, by A.S. Byatt. Byatt has long used fairy tales in her

writing and is often labeled a postmodernist. While Pullman asserts the physicality of existence, Byatt calls for a material understanding of creativity and consciousness:

I think you write with the whole of your body. We think with the whole of our body ... I think I invent people, increasingly, with the whole of my body. I sit there and I think their fingers with my fingers.

(Harrod and Adamson 2011: 78)

Byatt's complex depictions of bodies and matter in *The Children's Book* highlight an attempt similar to Pullman's to use linguistic creativity to construct stories of materiality that counter the prevailing assumptions of inertia and passivity. The novel reveals her belief in the importance of recognizing language's constructive potential without ignoring the earth, the flesh and the objects of existence that too play a role in the construction of life.

The Children's Book follows a dominant tradition of postmodern fairy-tale writers deconstructing the stories to refute their 'natural' or 'archetypal' roles and behaviors. Yet, while Byatt will not deny the postmodern emphasis on language and its power, noting that "words have their own life" (Byatt 2010: 102), she also complicates this narrative, creating a dialogue between language and matter which suggests that life is not purely mindful. When considering her recently discovered pregnancy, we are told that the novel's protagonist Olive

knew about amniotic fluid – the unborn creature did not *really* float in blood – but blood went to it, her blood, down a livid rope that could give life, or could strangle. These things were not spoken of, or written about. They were therefore more real, and more unreal, intensely, simultaneously.

(142)

Olive's awareness of the corporeal processes of birth suggests not just the creative ability of the body, but a terminative ability, a choice made by the flesh. The "livid rope" is alive, with intentions of its own, as Byatt plays on the dual meaning of livid as a physical appearance and a violent emotion. The reality that Olive grapples with is reflective of the tensions in the mind/body split and the sense of the physical being neither more nor less real. In social constructivist theories, "reality is often posited as a realm entirely separate from that of language, discourse, and culture" (Alaimo and Hekman 2008: 3), but for Olive and the other characters of the novel, material reality is inseparable from language and thought, and storytelling is fleshy.

Just as the formation of stories is corporeally grounded in *The Children's Book*, so too is the construction of pots, which are shaped and molded not only by potters' minds, but by their thoughtful hands. The potters of the novel are connected to the material by their profession – that is, "[t]o work with the stuff of the earth itself" (77) – and freely attribute thought to their bodies, valuing the feel and sense of an object over the description of it. In her essay on the work of potter Edmund de Waal, Byatt writes, "[p]ots are tactile before they are visual – they are made by fingers and need to be touched" (2014: 159). The pots, created with thinking fingers, must be felt as such. When Olive's daughter Dorothy holds one she immediately understands its importance as a physical object:

Dorothy stood with the pot in her hands, which held the cool light weight of the shell. The moment it was between her fingers, she felt it three-dimensional. It was a completely different thing if you measured it with your skin instead of your eyes. Its weight – and the empty air inside it – were part of it.

(Byatt 2010: 512)

The idea of measuring with touch gives agency to the body, suggesting a physical reality that denies the rationality of classical mathematical measurement (such as was venerated by Descartes) in favor of a more instinctive, corporeal measurement.

Like skin, clay too is given agency; brought to life. As the potters shape the clay with their knowing fingers, the clay shapes itself: “[t]he clay was wet and clammy and dead, and yet it had a motion of its own, a response, a kind of life” (Byatt 2010: 188). The response of the clay is indicative of a vital materialist vision of earth, moulded and yet simultaneously moulding itself. The fingers and the clay are almost inseparable at times, as the flesh and the wet earth simultaneously create:

Brown clay ran over his fingers as though they were becoming clay, smooth and homogeneous, or as though they were clay becoming flesh, with living knuckles and pads. The clay under his hands rose and grew into a thin cylindrical wall, higher and higher, as though it had its own will.

(Byatt 2010: 128)

Even when fired, the external artwork on the pots reflects the activity of the clay itself; this is no inert natural world, no dead earth made living, but a vibrant depiction of life and earth and art as one: “[t]hese are turbulent pots. Seething pots. Storms in teacups and vases. Creatures running through everything like maggots in cheese. Stately vessels with storms raging on them” (512). Far from moulding dead matter, potters must learn “to recognize the form to which the clay aspired” (129), as Byatt gives clay – and earth itself – intentions that are not gentle and sedate, but alive with vitality and consciousness.

Byatt’s focus on the material processes of bodies and earth and her vital depictions of matter ally her with a posthuman new materiality that neither discredits the power of language to shape the world, nor gives primacy to matter. Rather, she offers a vision of life as constructed by all bodies, human and nonhuman. The Edwardians of *The Children’s Book* “wanted to go back to the earth” (Byatt 2010: 391), and the novel itself – in the wake of the postmodern “flight from nature” – is also characterized by a desire to return to the earth, the flesh; the materiality of existence. The world of *The Children’s Book* is one in which the clay plays a part in the shaping of a pot, in which coal is described as having once been “living forests” (85) and “the dead wood lurched at her fingertips, and pulled” (374). Byatt’s universe is one where the dualisms of humanistic thought are dissolved. Stories, minds, bodies, nature and pots construct the world indivisibly; collectively part of a life that is multiple and fluid. As in fairy tales, matter is alive, like the words on the page – those vital constructions that come from life and create it too.

In fairy tales, the natural laws of the world are “held in suspension,” opening up spaces for reconsiderations of matter’s agency and nature/culture binaries. Just as Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘carnavalesque’ (1984) created a literary space

that turned convention upside down, the wonder of fairy tale can offer a depiction of existence outside dominant dualistic traditions. Contemporary revisions of fairy tale have the potential not only to remind us of social constructions of naturalness, but also of the wonders of nature, the vitality of matter, and the interconnectedness of existence. They can demonstrate – through alternate realities that differ from our own – how a reexamination of our relationship with matter might enable a more collective and inclusive relationship to the world and the supposedly different people around us. Those laws of nature might not be as fixed as once thought, and as Coole and Frost observe, science and biology are changing alongside philosophy and literature: “chaos and complexity theory ... are undermining the idea of stable and predictable material substance, hastening a realization that our natural environment is far more complex, unstable, fragile, and interactive than earlier models allowed” (2010: 13). Through complex depictions of nature, matter and flesh, fairy-tale literature can put into practice the new material agenda, and – in a space of suspended reality – alter those pervasive conceptions of ‘reality’ as materially fixed and passive. Kate Bernheimer, the fairy-tale writer and scholar, has said:

I have a sense that a proliferation of magical stories, especially fairy tales, is correlated to a growing awareness of human separateness from the wild and the natural world. In fairy tales the human and animal worlds are equal and mutually dependent. The violence, suffering, and beauty are shared.

(2010: xix)

The human and animal and *material* worlds are equal, she might have said, the trees, the rivers, the oceans, the objects are life in all its forms. With an eye on inclusivity, fairy tales might remind us that wonder should not be reserved for those with *minds*, but those with *matter*.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

OF GENRES AND GEOPOLITICS

The European fairy tale and the global novel



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Narrative genres, like the fairy tale and the novel, are often caught up in geopolitical fantasies ranging from the national and imperial to the postcolonial and diasporic. The fairy tale, for instance – exemplified by the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (KHM 1812–15, Children’s and Household Tales) – has long been understood as central to nineteenth-century European Romantic nationalisms (see, e.g., Snyder 1951; Stewart 1991; Abrahams 1993; Haase 1993; Harries 1997). Donald Haase articulates the underlying logic of the Grimms’ collection in relation to an emergent German nationalism in his richly historicized exploration of fairy tale ownership:

for the Grimms and many early folklorists, it was the so-called common people who best embodied a nation’s folk life ... As a product of the German folk, the tales ... would provide the German people with a magic mirror in which they could discern and thus reassert their national identity.

(1993: 385–6)

Louis L. Snyder further emphasizes the Grimms’ active role in developing the tales “in order to glorify German traditions and to stimulate German national sentiment” (1951: 209). A little over a century later, the German “identity” elaborated in KHM was, of course, incorporated into a vastly different German nationalist effort under National Socialism (Snyder 1951; Dow and Lixfield 1991; Abrahams 1993; Haase 1993). While KHM is perhaps paradigmatic of the fairy tale’s entanglement in nation formation and its ongoing relation to national identity, it is certainly not unique; indeed, the Grimms’ tales inspired similar collecting, archiving, and publishing efforts across the British Isles, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Like the fairy tale, the novel has also been widely imagined and theorized as deeply implicated in the production of the nation. Ian Watt (1957) famously attributed the rise of the novel to the interlocking forces of nationalism, capitalism, and individualism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and Benedict Anderson saw in the novel, together with the newspaper, the “technical means for ‘re-presenting’

the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (1991: 25; emphasis in original). But the idea of the novel as a primary driver of nationalism predates contemporary literary history and cultural theory. Indeed, such an idea is implicit in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s concept of *Weltliteratur* (world literature), which suggests a comparative approach to the production of literature that “reflects early nineteenth-century tenets of nationalist thinking, particularly the Herderian concept of national soul embedded in spirit and language” (Cooppan 2009: 11). Even more, the reproduction and reiteration of the novel’s origin through a recurring narrative of European national-textual “firsts” – the first English novel, the first French novel, the first German novel, the first Spanish novel, etc. – further entrenches the “equation of novel and nation” (Marcus 2003: 684).

And yet, despite the durability of these cultural narratives – the enduring associations of the novel and the fairy tale with the production of the nation – each genre also assumes forms that challenge the nationalist fantasies seeking to assimilate meaning into particular, even singular, geopolitical histories and desires. Thus, for example, the European fairy tale slips its ties to nationalism as it approaches universality through repeated acts of cultural condensation: the literary and cultural canonization of specific fairy tale versions through self-referential and self-perpetuating histories of translation, reproduction, anthologizing, illustration, and adaptation into other media, including powerful transnational forms such as Disney’s animated films. In addition, the European fairy-tale’s formulaic structure provides a certain cohesion to the genre that further suggests the universality of individual tale types. Where the novel is concerned, Edward Said’s “contrapuntal reading” (1993) and other post-colonial reading strategies have challenged and extended the novel’s national and spatial boundaries by highlighting the unacknowledged and largely invisible traces of imperialism in canonical literary texts. Moreover, as the novel continues to gravitate toward the global, it contests the cultural weight of the nation as its ideological and formal origin. In a persuasive theorization of postcolonial literature as inflected by the persistent hauntings of both nationalism and globalization, Vilashini Cooppan characterizes the global as

the transverse networks of influence and exchange that interrupt and cut across the fictive linearities of national history and the fictive homogeneities of national subjectivity, while also locating those mobile subjectivities and histories within the world-systems of imperialism, nationalism, and capitalism.

(2009: 3)

Although Cooppan’s understanding of the global is not limited to the immediate context of the novel, it nonetheless provides a productive starting point for conceptualizing the global novel as a genre anchored to historical and geographical particularities even as it spirals through time and space, expanding narrative possibilities across multiple dimensions freed from the genre’s conventional investment in linearity and realism.

Regardless of their divergent impulses – one toward the universal, the other toward the particular – the European fairy tale and the global novel come together in innovative and compelling forms: the transnational novel punctuated by European fairy tales (Karen King-Aribisala’s *The Hangman’s Game*, 2007); the European fairy tale reworked as postcolonial novel (Murray Bail’s *Eucalyptus*, 1998; Catherynne

M. Valente's *Six-Gun Snow White*, 2015; S.P. Somtow's *Bluebeard's Castle*, 2003); the European fairy tale reimagined in an Anglo-American setting and continually haunted by a global presence (Helen Oyeyemi's *Mr. Fox*, 2011 and *Boy, Snow, Bird*, 2014). Such convergences – forcefully defamiliarizing and uncanny – highlight the relays between the two genres in ways that make visible the fairy tale's sedimentation and the global novel's historical overdetermination, both of which obscure their ideological and political underpinnings. As hybrid narratives, the European-fairy-tale-as-global-novel and the global-novel-as-European-fairy-tale disturb each other's traditional genre boundaries and ultimately expose the geopolitical dimensions of their production. "Genres," Cooppan maintains, "are objects in motion and histories in process," and she warns that "if we look only for their most familiar apparitions, we may well miss their transformations" (2009: 20). Inspired by this conceptualization of genre, with its critical attention to history as a fluid and shifting phenomenon, I want to begin by exploring temporality in the European fairy tale and the global novel as a critical register that not only facilitates the mutual adaptation of the two genres but also opens possibilities for their radical reinterpretation. I then offer a reading of Karen King-Aribisala's *The Hangman's Game*, acutely punctuated by "Snow White," as an example of how the doubled motions and intercalated transformations of the European fairy tale and the global novel might enrich our sense of multiple histories in process.

ONCE UPON ANOTHER TIME

Narrative is largely unimaginable – if not impossible – without a temporal dimension, but, as Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) argues in his characterization of the *chronotope*, time works differently in different genres. Thus, although Peter Brooks (1984) views his reading of the Grimms' "All-Kinds-of-Fur" as an exemplary case of narrative functioning and applies his narratological theory of plotting and temporal progression to both the novel and the fairy tale, fairy-tale time and novel time are often quite distinct. The European fairy tale's formulaic opening, its "once upon a time," conjures a time outside of historical, linear time. Unlike mythological time ("way back" time, perhaps even the cultural origin of time) or legendary time (historical, real time), fairy-tale time is fantastic and defies naturalized understandings of temporality. Even more, while the fairy tale may seem to inhabit a general historical time, especially when rendered visually, it continually escapes the constraints of real time – a princess sleeps for a hundred years without aging a day; a prince lives for centuries as a beast while awaiting the beautiful virgin who will disenchant him, returning him to the moment immediately preceding his transformation. Particularly significant is the quotidian nature of both the fairy tale's fantastic time and its temporal disjuncture, its time-out-of-timeness; like the genre's other magical elements and wondrous features, its fantastic time passes in utterly unremarkable fashion. The novel, by contrast, is generally mired in real, material time – historic, contemporary, sometimes both – and governed by dominant understandings of temporality as linear and progressive. Indeed, it is the European novel's particular relationship to time – its capacity for multiple timelines and historical distance (Bakhtin 1982), its simultaneity (Watt 1957) – that has been cited in distinguishing it from other genres.

And yet, if time works differently in the fairy tale than it does in the novel, it also seems to work differently in the global novel than it does in the national novel. In “Literature for the Planet,” Wai Chee Dimock posits reading as the basis for understanding literature as a phenomenon that “extends across space and time, messing up territorial sovereignty and numerical chronology,” and she offers this model as a direct challenge to Anderson’s conception of the novel’s role in the production of the nation-state (2001: 174). In contrast to the study of national literatures as driven by an assumed conflation of the literary and the territorial, Dimock posits a planetary conception of literature that “holds out to its readers dimensions of space and time so far-flung and so deeply recessional that they can never be made to coincide with the synchronic plane of the geopolitical map” (2001: 175). Dimock’s focus is, of course, on reading and the study of literature as planetary and transhistorical endeavors, but her turn to Einstein’s theory of the “relativity of simultaneity” and her characterization of a planetary literature as facilitating “a plurality of operative nows” can also illuminate the global novel, a genre inevitably occupied with the postcolony and with diaspora, two realms in which, and about which, time and space have been reimagined through a multidimensionality that contests dominant perceptions of Western history as linear progress (2001: 174).

Foregrounding multiple temporalities as critical to a renewed theorization of diaspora and postcolonial identity, Michelle M. Wright, in *Physics of Blackness*, reconceptualizes Black diaspora by privileging what she calls “Epiphenomenal time” – “the ‘now,’ through which the past, present, and future are always interpreted” – over a “Middle Passage epistemology,” an ideological formation founded on a linear narrative of progress that necessarily excludes individual experiences of Blackness that fail to adhere to its paradigm (2015: 4). Like Dimock, she insists on the power of recognizing the infinite possibilities of any given moment in time, a recognition that enables nuanced and complex understandings of identities across the Black diaspora:

Conceiving of collective identities as dimensions helps us, as they multiply, better understand the endless valences of Blackness in the Diaspora ... In other words, interpellating identities free of linearity ... connects us with attempts to understand nonlinearity as the true nature of our physical universe.

(Wright 2015: 110)

Achille Mbembe anticipates Wright’s epiphenomenal time in his theory of the postcolony, which similarly imagines time as the infinite collision of temporal possibilities: “time is not a series but an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones” (quoted in Cooppan 2009: 181). Diaspora as epiphenomenal dimensionality, postcolony as interlocking moments in time: these ever-proliferating, chaotic alternatives to the linearity of Western temporality, models of “a plurality of operative nows,” resonate in and with the global novel – whether postcolonial, neocolonial, transnational, or diasporic – thereby disrupting its easy assimilation into dominant narratives of progress, liberation, and independence. In the specific context of world literature, Cooppan calls this “the time of genre,” a productive conceptual frame that might “lead us away from raw sequential histories toward more constellated ones in which a moment in time, a structure of power,

formal strategies of representation, and an affective sense of what it is to be in history all converge” (2009: 196). Such expansive temporalities and their resistance to time’s hegemonic insistence on linear history recall, too, the fairy tale’s fantastic and disjunctive temporalities. Fantastic and epiphenomenal time meet in – and reverberate through – the European-fairy-tale-as-global-novel and the global-novel-as-European-fairy-tale, creating uncanny bonds that open new interpretive horizons.

SNOW WHITE BETWEEN REVOLUTIONS

Karen King-Aribisala’s novel *The Hangman’s Game* (2007) gives literary form to the colliding temporalities of Mbembe’s postcolony through metafictional play. Narrated by a Guyanese woman, living in contemporary Nigeria and writing a novel about the last slave revolt in British Guiana in 1823, *The Hangman’s Game* is comprised of colliding pasts, presents, and futures that interweave the personal and political intrigues of the fictional plot with the personal and political dimensions of the narrator’s life as shaped by Nigeria’s militarized, dictatorial regime and the revolutionary fervor it inspires. While the novel is punctuated throughout by references to European nursery rhymes – “Three Blind Mice” provides both structure and title to the fictional novel; “Mary, Mary Quite Contrary” is a source for descriptions of Mary Smithers, one of the fictional novel’s main characters – it is the European fairy tale “Snow White” that provides the heart of both novels. In the Guyanese and Nigerian contexts, European fairy tales and nursery rhymes are, of course, themselves echoes of a colonial past, seemingly innocuous and apolitical cultural forms taken up and naturalized in school primers and children’s books. But “Snow White” – as/at the thematic, temporal, and narrative center of the two novels; as/at the point of their greatest suturing – is more than a generic specter of the colonial in the postcolonial; rather, it is an invitation, indeed a demand, to read the entwined histories of transatlantic slavery, state and religious imperialism, and colonial and postcolonial politics and revolution through the gendered lens of the domestic, through the gendered priorities of the two novels. As such, it exemplifies the power of the European fairy tale – deeply associated with a gendered domestic politics in its familiar “universal” form – to expose the patriarchal assumptions that so frequently underpin narratives of political liberation, even when complicated by epiphenomenal temporalities.

The Hangman’s Game opens with a writerly struggle: “They wanted me dead,” the narrator claims of her characters, the seven thinly fictionalized actors at the center of the last slave revolt in British Guiana, whom she describes as “playing with me, with my words, inviting me to a hanging death” even as she acknowledges that she is “able to control their words, their thoughts and action” (Karen King-Aribisala 2007: 7–8). The struggle over control of the past, over the narration of history, over the agency of historical characters rendered fictitious – animated in the competing desires of author and characters – generates a sort of writer’s block that inspires the narrator to travel from her home in Guyana to Nigeria, where she might begin to “understand the reasons behind our ancestral enslavement” by “[living] among its peoples and [discovering] at first hand why hands exchanged silver for the likes of me” (9). Once in Nigeria, she and her local contact, a linguistics professor and lay pastor, fall almost immediately in love, marry, and have a daughter. The main narrative begins two years later when she is pregnant with her second child and still

struggling with her characters over control of her novel, *Three Blind Mice*. Past, present, and future collapse at the origin of her narrative: “Their stories I birthed with my own words. Now this. My own implant implanting. Plantocracy. Word. Slavery. Word. Christianity. Word. Words?” (13).

Three Blind Mice, the fictional novel within the novel (represented through a different typeface), focuses on a politics of intimacy and desire that provides the backdrop for the last slave revolt in British Guiana. Although it features seven characters – the British missionary John Smithers, his wife Mary, their servant/slave Rosita, her husband and slave leader Quamina, Rosita’s mother Auntie Lou, Governor Murrain, and the slave catcher McTurkeyen – the narrative is focalized primarily through the women. Mary mourns her recent miscarriage and subsequent infertility, obsesses over John’s obvious sexual desire for Rosita, and worries about John’s resistance to the Governor’s warning that he not preach equality to the slaves who make up his congregation. Rosita yearns for John and wonders at Quamina’s passion for revolution above all else. Auntie Lou, the Governor’s house slave and lover, secures Rosita’s position in the Smithers’s house and meditates on the Governor’s vulnerabilities, offering insights into the pathetic man he is beneath the official power granted him by his position. *Three Blind Mice* tracks the historical record – John, scapegoated and convicted of treason for inspiring the slaves to revolt, dies in prison; Quamina, leader of the rebellion, is executed, his head installed on a post for public display; and Governor Murrain, stripped of his position, drowns with the ship bearing him back to England – while also reframing it in order to imagine the three women and their interrelationships at the center of the revolution.

Unfolding through temporal jumps and disjunctures, through flashbacks and futures that continually reorient its present, *Three Blind Mice* creates literal adjacencies with the time of the novel’s main narrative. This sense of the past touching and accumulating in the present – recalling Mbembe’s theory of time in the postcolony as an “interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures” – is especially evident in the way the fictional novel bleeds into the narrator’s present and fuels her struggle with the characters: “To think that they want to enslave me as they have been enslaved, bespeak their wretched lives into my life and turn my world into a chaos of time!” (13). This quality of the narrator’s life as “a chaos of time,” an enslavement of present to past, materializes as the seven historical characters meet their uncanny doubles in her personal story: she and Mary, her husband and John, Nurse and Rosita, Gardener and Quamina, Mother of Nurse and Auntie Lou, the dictator “Butcher Boy” and the Governor, and Butcher Boy’s soldiers and McTurkeyen. Telling her own story as she writes her novel, the narrator slips between and among competing realities and temporalities, between and among the people in her life, the characters in her novel, and their names, desires, and motives. Like Mary, she suspects that her husband is attracted to the young Christian woman, the admiring acolyte, who seems to disrupt the domestic scene with her very presence; Nurse, like Rosita, is an unrivaled beauty, fair-skinned with luxurious dark hair, in a cultural context where skin color and hair texture (over)determine value and in a (post)colonial context where the specificities of such beauty imply a history, often violent, of interracial sexuality. Although the narrator’s jealous suspicions seem baseless, unlike Mary’s, her preoccupation with them – with a politics of intimacy and desire,

a politics of color, race, and beauty, a politics of present enslavement to the past – provides the same backdrop to incipient revolution.

The story of colonial romance and interracial desire is, of course, a familiar, perhaps even expected, one; the story of the love triangle even more so. What is not so familiar and certainly unexpected, however, is the use of “Snow White” – the use of the European fairy tale – to animate these particular themes, especially in the context of slavery, imperialism, neocolonialism, and global politics. And yet, “Snow White” sits at the literal center of the novel where the narrator braids it into the plot of *Three Blind Mice* and, thus, implicitly into its doubled present. Focalized through Mary, the “Snow White” chapter of the fictional novel amplifies the trope of female jealousy that seems to drive the tale and that has definitely overwhelmed its critical reception. At the same time, the chapter also troubles that trope by situating it in a social world structured by colonialism, slavery, Christian evangelism, and the complexities of race, gender, sex, and power that they entail. “Snow White” provides the motifs – beauty, complexion, and the masculine mirror; female jealousy and violence – through which Mary understands the dynamic governing her relationships to, and with, Rosita and John. Meanwhile, her experience and worldview as a British missionary’s wife living on a plantation in Demerara provide the racial imaginary through which she justifies her actions in their love triangle.

Tightly coupling her worldview with “Snow White,” Mary’s version of the tale is an intimate account of the gendered and raced dimensions of sexual jealousy and violence. It is inspired by an encounter in her bedroom, where Mary, “maddened by seeing the embrace in [John’s and Rosita’s] avoiding eyes,” commands Rosita to gaze at herself in the mirror (108). As Rosita does so, she loses herself in the truth of what others have said about her: “she *was* strikingly beautiful. Those eyebrows, her large eyes, the lashes thick and long, her red mouth” (108). But Mary’s presence breaks her self-gazing; their eyes meet in the mirror, and Mary’s appreciation of Rosita’s beauty gives way to a racialized ugliness:

The black so and so. The nigger child who wanted to dip into the pot of her sweet John hadn’t seen herself in a mirror! ... But what did he see when he saw Rosita? Well she would control that seeing.

(108)

This initial exchange is the prelude to Mary’s use of “Snow White,” which shuttles back and forth between conventional representations of the tale’s dominant motifs – “The queen asked the man-mirror who was the fairest of them all” (109); “Then she killed Snow White and she was free of her” (110); “The Prince kisses her and with his love Snow White is alive again” (110) – and their incorporation into Mary’s personal narrative of racialized violence against Rosita, which first takes a psychological form. Demanding that Rosita undress before her, Mary reduces Rosita to object status, a slave on the market block subject to her assessing gaze: “‘Yes the mirror says you are beautiful. Good arms, a small waist. Turn around. Good buttocks. You would make a good sale’” (111). From there, her violence quickly becomes physical as well. She terrorizes Rosita with her “huge cutting scissors” and their “big sharpened blades”: “Mary moved closer to Rosita, still holding the scissors. Then with quiet deliberation she pointed them at Rosita’s neck. The girl screamed as the

beaks of silver touched her skin, then the blades were opened and were grinding and snipping through the girl's tresses" (110–11). After chopping away at Rosita's hair, Mary asks her what the mirror now says of her, and Rosita replies, "Madam, the mirror says I am not beautiful" (111). The violence seems to have subsided with this response until Mary sees Rosita's pubic hair, picks up the scissors, and claims, "We're not finished yet" (111); as she moves toward Rosita, however, Mary notices a scar across Rosita's stomach. The mark of Rosita's having been "cut" in childbirth pushes Mary out of her violence and into a melancholy lethargy. The chapter ends with her dismissing Rosita, but, significantly, not before she instructs her – perhaps in an act of atonement – to "take those papers ... You'll find papers, speeches ... by Wilberforce on the abolition of slavery" (112; ellipses in original).

Framed by the chapter's interpersonal prelude and its final revolutionary act, the European fairy tale's presence at the thematic and narrative heart of this global novel compels a reading of colonialism, slavery, and revolution through the prism of gender and sex. While such an understanding is not new, neither is it yet commonplace. What the seeming incongruity of "Snow White" to both novels suggests, however, is more than a simple privileging of the female characters' perspectives on slavery and race, power and politics; rather, through the tale's explicit attention to female jealousy and the violence it inspires, "Snow White" – and especially the novel's distinctly imperialist, racialized, and racist version of the tale – captures the ways that global institutions like colonialism and slavery, ostensibly confined to a detached socio-political realm, inhabit and influence every imaginable dimension of the social worlds they produce, including the most intimate. As such, their profound violences are inevitably mirrored in the domestic sphere, in the imperial gaze of one woman upon another, in the politics of sexual rivalry that necessarily structures such relations, not only in the past but also in the way the past reverberates in and through the present. At the same time, "Snow White," as the uniquely framed centerpiece of the two novels, also makes clear that the tale's violences, its consolidation around a gendered power struggle that foregrounds beauty and sexuality, are related to global politics that exceed the private sphere. In other words, *The Hangman's Game* stages "Snow White" such that the women's interpersonal struggle is itself the impetus and mechanism for revolution. Here, then, "Snow White" – rendered simultaneously familiar (through citation of the tale's traditional motifs) and unfamiliar (through the plot of the fictional novel) – suggests some of the ways the European fairy tale might reveal cultural and political meanings that remain obscured even as the global novel challenges what Wright calls a "Middle Passage epistemology." That is, the European fairy tale uncovers the often unmarked patriarchal foundations of revolutionary imaginaries and their related postcolonial politics.

ANOTHER SNOW WHITE, ANOTHER SLAVERY

Just as the European fairy tale helps excavate unanticipated meanings in the global novel, the global novel helps challenge the European fairy tale's reduction to ahistorical, universal form. In the specific case of "Snow White" and its inclusion in *The Hangman's Game*, the novel's nuanced and complex attention to slavery and colonialism as accumulations of the past that haunt the neocolonial present raises the specter of another "Snow White" and another slavery that similarly haunt the

more familiar version of the tale: specifically, Giambattista Basile's "The Little Slave Girl," one of the tales narrated on the second day of a five-day storytelling event that constitutes the frame of his 1634–1636 Neapolitan fairy-tale collection, *The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones* (Canepa 2007). The story is a brief one: Lisa, born to a mother who is magically impregnated when she is grazed by a petal as she jumps over a rose bush, is cursed by a fairy, who decrees that the girl will die when she is seven years old as a result of her mother's leaving a deadly comb in her hair. When this occurs, the mother is heartbroken and, after placing Lisa in seven nestled crystal caskets, which she locks in their own room, she dies, leaving her belongings to her brother, the baron with whom she had been living. Shortly after taking a wife, the baron leaves on a hunting trip and instructs his wife to care for the house but not to open the door whose key is hidden away in his desk; she, of course, opens the door and finds Lisa, now a beautiful young woman. Once she recovers from her surprise, she – in a move that anticipates Mary's actions toward Rosita – "immediately cut off Lisa's hair," after which she gives the girl "a juicy beating, [putting] her in a ragged dress, and every day [unloading] lumps on her head, eggplants on her eyes, brands on her face, and [giving] her a mouth that looked like it had eaten raw pigeons" (Canepa 2007: 197). With some magical intervention, the baron eventually recognizes this battered figure as his niece, banishes his wife, and marries Lisa to a good husband. Although there is some debate as to whether "The Little Slave Girl" is a version of "Snow White" – the Grimms clearly identified it as such while Christine Shojaei Kawan argues that it "lacks one of the two core elements of *Snow White*, namely the love of men" (2008: 327) – the tale itself contains several of the same (or very similar) key motifs and plot elements, including female jealousy as its driving force.

Despite its title, slavery is not much described in "The Little Slave Girl," and it is certainly not racialized in an explicit way. Nonetheless, several details attest to an underlying association between slavery and racial difference as it was conceptualized at the time. For instance, when the baron's wife finds Lisa, she exclaims that he was vigilant about the secret room "so that no one would see the Mohammed that he was worshipping in the caskets!" (197). Benedetto Croce, one of the earliest critical commentators on Basile's collection, notes that this reference probably derives from a common European legend in which Mohammed's body was "preserved in Medina in a coffin that was suspended in the air by the force of a magnet" (quoted in Canepa 2007: 197). Later in the tale, when the baron asks Lisa, among the others in the household, what she would like from the fair, the wife interjects, "[g]o ahead, put this thick-lipped slave in the same bag as us ... let's not award so much importance to an ugly animal like her!" (197). These references to Mohammed, animality, and physical features like "thick lips" interpolate Lisa into a slavery associated with the Moor, a common origin for Italian slaves throughout the medieval and early modern period (Epstein 2001), and one that carries with it signs of racial otherness.

That Basile imagined slaves through these specific cultural discourses of racial and religious difference is further articulated in the frame tale, largely structured by a version of the true and false brides, in which the false bride is a "cricket-legged slave girl," described as a "mass of black flesh," "that black night of a slave," and one who speaks in the "Neapolitan-Moorish patois" common to Naples and other regions of Italy with significant numbers of Moorish slaves (Canepa 2007: 39). Thus, although Lisa is neither a Moor nor a slave, "The Little Slave Girl" is clearly informed

by slavery as a marker of racial otherness, and this correlation moves forward in time to haunt the Grimms' "Snow White," where color symbolism – and especially the fetishization of Snow White's fair complexion as one of the primary markers of her superior beauty – may be its only remaining trace. To read the Grimms' "Snow White" as a European fairy tale shaped by early modern ideas about slavery and race may seem like a stretch of the critical imagination; and yet, the story's placement at the heart of *Three Blind Mice* and *The Hangman's Game*, with their explicit themes of slavery and colonialism, encourages a reading that challenges the fairy tale's essentially de-raced universality and restores historical specificity to its genealogy.

The European fairy tale and the global novel are each transformed by the uncanniness of their convergence. On its own, the European fairy tale is generally free of the uncanny because the fantastic is so thoroughly normalized in the genre; when it merges with the global novel, however, it creates another uncanny, the uncanny of their meeting, in which the familiarity of repetition is replaced by a repetition that disrupts the familiar, leaving an otherness in its place. Even more, the European fairy tale, with its seemingly universal familiar, extends the uncanny implicit in the global novel, a Derridean uncanny predicated on the displacement of the familiar by an otherness born of repeated return (Derrida 1994; Cooppan 2009: 15–19). At the same time, the global novel defamiliarizes the European fairy tale, exposing the trick by which it assumes its universality, revealing, instead, the geopolitical contexts of its production and transmission.

If the global novel contests the European fairy tale's universality, it also challenges the European fairy tale's critical relationship to Romantic nationalism and the implicit, sometimes explicit, violences necessary to produce and maintain the myth of the nation. Fostering Cooppan's "time of genre" and expanding Dimock's "plurality of operative nows," the global novel reframes the European fairy tale so as to demand attention to the complicated, cross-cutting historical and political contexts of particular fairy-tale genealogies, circulations, and transformations in ways that rupture the tight bonds between tale and territory. The European fairy tale's presence in the global novel, in turn, pushes the global novel beyond its overdetermined interpellation into linear progress narratives that move from nation and empire to postcolony and diaspora. Instead, the European-fairy-tale-as-global-novel and the global-novel-as-European-fairy-tale encourage alternative possibilities for mapping – both intellectually and ideologically – historical violences in ways that don't simply collapse into familiar master narratives and the genres that sustain them.

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